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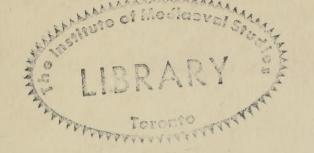
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July 1876





THE LIFE AND TIMES

OF

Saint Margaret,

QUEEN AND PATRONESS

OF

SCOTLAND.

By a Secular Priest.

"THE QUEEN THAT BORE THEE, OFTENER UPON HER KNEES THAN ON HER FEET, DIED EVERY DAY SHE LIVED."

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THE LIFE OF ST. MARGARET.

CHAPTER I.

Birth of the Princess Margaret.—She spends her childhood in Hungary, at the Court of St. Stephen.

Eight hundred years ago, the court of St. Edward the Confessor was the residence of a young princess, named Margaret, of whom few, beyond that court, knew anything. Her life, up to that time, had been a checquered one; if, indeed, we can properly call a life checquered which had been almost entirely passed in the dark shadow of misfortune. Long before she was born, her grandfather, Edmund Ironside, had been murdered, and his share of the kingdom of England seized by Canute the Dane. Her father and her uncle, the sons of the murdered king, were sent by the usurper to a powerful friend of his in Sweden, together with secret instructions that the unhappy boys should be put safely out of the way. Canute's friend seems to have had more conscience than Canute himself; and, instead of putting the poor children to death, he privately sent them away to the court of Stephen, king of Hungary,probably the same Stephen as we find honoured as a

saint, with a festival, in September, every year. Indeed, before we have done with the life of this young princess, Margaret, we shall probably discover a strong family likeness between her mode of life and what passed every day at the court of St. Stephen.

Margaret's father and uncle, then, still mere boys, and thus rudely driven about the world, were kindly received by the king of Hungary. Edwin, the elder of the two, and the uncle of our young princess, did not live to be a man; but his brother Edward became so popular at the Hungarian court as to marry the queen's niece, Agatha, a daughter of Bruno, brother of the emperor St. Henry. Their union was blessed with three children: - Edgar, afterwards surnamed the Etheling; Christina, who lived to become Abbess of Wilton; and Margaret, the future queen of Scotland. From what is known of later events in her life, the date of her birth must have been somewhere between November 17th, 1046, and November 16th, 1047. By the time that she had become eminent enough to make people anxious to know its exact date, no one survived to give the information.

But, before Margaret was born, several changes had happened at the Court of England. Canute, at his death, had been succeeded first by one of his sons, and then by another; and when the second died, (1042), the English drove the Danes out of the kingdom, and looked about once more for a king of their own. If

they had known anything of the young grandson of Edmund Ironside, or if Hungary had not been so far from England, Margaret's father might now have recovered his rights, she might have been born in more prosperous circumstances, and the whole course of her future life might have been very different from what it actually became.

To understand what took place at this crisis in the affairs of England, we must remember that the father of Edmund Ironside was twice married. Edmund's mother died, Ethelred, his father, married Emma, the Flower and the Pearl of Normandy, and the aunt of William, afterwards the conqueror. Her eldest son, Edward, became a favourite with the English; from his retreat in Normandy he had, for many years, watched the stormy course of events in his own country; and now that the Danes were gone, and the English in want of a king of their own, he stepped in, and secured the crown without difficulty. According to the laws of feudal succession, there can be no doubt that it belonged to Margaret's father, Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside's eldest son. Yet even our interest in all belonging to this young princess will hardly dispose us to regret an arrangement that gave St. Edward the Confessor to the throne of England; although that arrangement excluded the family of the younger Edward from its inheritance.

All those events happened before Margaret was

born. St. Edward did not invite his nephew from Hungary, as might have been expected, to reside in England. So it was that Margaret was born, and that she spent all her childhood at the Court of St. Stephen. A royal princess in exile, even although she may have kind friends about her, is a notable instance of human weakness. Possessing only the name of rank, without its independence, and its other substantial attributes, excluded by the accident of her birth from those avenues to wealth, and influence, and station which are open to the inferior ranks of her countrywomen,-a poor and homeless princess might advantageously change places with the humblest lady in her kingdom. At the same time it must be remembered that, even in a worldly point of view, high position, and commanding influence are not generally good for the mind. There are few persons whom they do not more or less spoil; few characters which are not sensibly deteriorated by them. The direct tendency of an influential position is to foster habits of imperiousness and selfishness; many a gentle mind has been irremediably vulgarised by high elevation. Not that misfortune is without its peculiar and kindred dangers; but, on the whole, it is a better school for the character than the precincts of a reigning sovereign's court.

Our young princess was fortunate in her opportunities of mixing in a court where earthly rank was made more attractive by the practice of the loveliest virtues. The king himself taught his courtiers, by his example, the duties of generosity towards the poor, and of tender sympathy with the sick; he was remarkable for the practice of prayer, and is said to have gained some of his temporal successes over his enemies on his knees. More especially he prayed that he might be permitted to see Hungary completely christianised before his death. His exertions with a view to that end were such as to earn for him the title of the Apostle of Hungary, and the permission of the Holy See, for himself and his successors, to have a cross carried before them in processions. Out of his tender devotion to the Mother of Jesus, he dedicated his kingdom to her; he took leave of this world on the day of her assumption, which he had taught his people to call Great Lady-day, Such a man could not fail to create an influence around him, of which even children like Margaret must have been sensible. Long after she had bidden adieu to Hungary and the home of her youth, and when she had entered on her own arduous Apostolate, she could not fail to remember the engaging lessons which, as a child, she had learnt from her father's royal friend and benefactor.

CHAPTER II.

St. Edward invites the Princess Margaret and her family to England.—At the Conquest they retire from England, and are driven by a storm into Scotland, where the Princess Margaret is married to King Malcolm III.

As time went on, and St. Edward felt himself growing old, without a child to whom he could transmit his crown, he resolved to invite his nephew, Edward, to come with his family to England, probably intending to receive him and entertain him as the future heir of the kingdom. The bishop of Worcester carried this invitation into Hungary, and the younger Edward acceded without difficulty to the wishes of his uncle. Margaret must have been about ten or eleven years old when her father returned, with all his family, to his native land. He did not long survive the change; and thus his only son, Edgar, the Etheling, became the heir presumptive of St. Edward. Now, it seemed as if fortune were at last about to favour our young princess; she was now more nearly in the position to which her royal descent entitled her; she seemed destined at no remote day to become the sister of the reigning monarch, with the bright future incident to her position opening before her. In other respects, too, she had lost nothing

by her change of residence from Hungary to England. She had left the Court of St. Stephen only to enter the Court of St. Edward, in which the bright example of the beautiful queen, Edith, was only surpassed by the life of her holy husband. The company of saints does not always, indeed, make saints; but where the disposition towards what was good was so decided as in the case of young Margaret, the society first of her uncle Stephen, and next of her granduncle Edward, must have powerfully assisted the tendency of her own mind to the practice of perfection.

During his early days of adversity, St. Edward had made a vow of pilgrimage to Rome. Afterwards, when he proposed to redeem his pledge, his counsellors strongly opposed it, representing to him the extreme danger of leaving his kingdom in those critical times, when several neighbouring states were watching their opportunity to snatch the crown of England from his head. He, therefore, solicited and obtained leave from Pope Leo IX. to compound for the remission of his vow, on certain conditions. One of these was that he should enlarge the Benedictine Monastery at Westminster. The work approached its close in the year 1065; and, on Holy Innocent's-day, the Abbey-church was dedicated with great ceremony to the service of God, in honour of his blessed apostle St. Peter. St. Edward had been declining in health for some time before, and was unable to be present at this great ceremony, Queen Edith, therefore, represented her husband on the occasion. Our young Margaret, now nineteen years of age, was one of the ornaments of the court on that day. Within a few weeks she took part in the second pageant which that venerable abbey has witnessed; within a few weeks she accompanied Queen Edith, as the holy remains of St. Edward were carried to their last resting place.

Edgar, the Etheling, was now by right king of England. But he was no match for the rough and unscrupulous soldiers who coveted his crown. Harold, son of the late Godwin, Earl of Kent, and brother of Queen Edith, at once laid claim to it, on the pretence that it had been bequeathed to him by St. Edward. William, Duke of Normandy, also made a similar claim, on a similar pretence; and, soon after, landing in England with an army, in support of his pretensions, he defeated and killed Harold in the memorable battle of Hastings, and thus at one blow became master of the kingdom. A faint but unavailing attempt was made to support the claims of Edgar; but it was soon abandoned as hopeless, and the dark clouds of misfortune again gathered round the princess Margaret and her family. Her brother, finding nothing but humiliations in store for him if he remained in England, prepared to return to Hungary with his mother and his sister Margaret. Christina, it seems, had by this time left her family to follow the life of a nun. Margaret, then, with her mother and brother sailed from England, a few months after the battle of Hastings, intending again to claim the hospitality of the Hungarian court. Providence, however, had very different designs for the refugees. A storm overtook them on their short sea-voyage; they were blown out of their course into the Frith of Forth, in Scotland, and found a harbour of refuge on the coast of Fifeshire, a good many miles from the mouth of the Frith, at a place which was afterwards called St. Margaret's Bay, or St. Margaret's Hope.

A few years before this event, the crown of Scotland had been recovered by Malcolm, the third sovereign of the name, called also Cean-more, or Great-head. The tragical end of his father Duncan has obtained a wide celebrity from the genius of our immortal Shakspeare. Young Malcolm fled from the usurper, Macbeth, and found an honourable retreat in England, with St. Edward, who further assisted him with an army, under the command of Siward. Earl of Northumberland. The treacherous Macbeth was killed in battle, and the young king regained his rights the same year that Margaret and her family were invited to come and reside in England. He was living with his court at Dunfermline, in Fifeshire, when news was brought to him that the royal English exiles were wrecked upon his coast, and within a very few miles of his residence. With characteristic generosity, he made haste to repay the debt that he owed to St. Edward, by conducting the refugees to Dunfermline, where he made them welcome to his best hospitality. His goodness of heart was in no long time amply overpaid, by his obtaining possession of the heart and the hand of the princess Margaret, then in the flower of her youth and beauty.

CHAPTER III.

Barbarous condition of the Scotch.—Queen Margaret's prayers, charities, and love of mortification.—She obtains justice for the poor, and redeems many English captives taken in war.—Pilgrimage to St. Andrews.

Scotland at that time must be considered as having scarcely begun to emerge from a state of barbarism. We speak of it as a kingdom, because its crown was independent; but its population probably did not equal half the modern population of Glasgow. Whole districts were occupied by morasses, by swamps, and by unproductive forests. The work of Ninian, of Palladius, and of Columba, to which it owed its Christianity, was not indeed wholly destroyed; but it had suffered cruelly from the incursions of Danish and Norwegian pirates, and from the fierce passions of rival races within the country itself.

An improvement had followed the union of its northern and southern inhabitants, under Kenneth Macalpine, in the previous century; yet is impossible

to doubt that, when young Malcolm returned from exile to take possession of his inheritance, he arrived among a people who had nearly everything to learn of the humanising arts of peace. War, and the chase, and a rude kind of husbandry were too probably the extent of their attainments. Many of the older monasteries had perished by foreign invasion; the voice of religion could only make itself feebly heard amidst the bloody feuds of the clans, and the more terrible assaults of their English neighbours. Indeed, it is hardly a matter of doubt whether Malcolm himself was much superior in cultivation to the rude serfs and barons who looked up to him as their sovereign. The arrival of the princess Margaret with her retinue, and his choice of her for his queen, were events of the very highest importance in their results on the late history of the Scottish nation. Its civilisation may be assumed to date from the occurrence of those fortunate events. If polished manners were anywhere to be found at that day, Margaret must have acquired them at the court of Stephen, and her mother could not fail to have been familiar with them at the court of the emperor. Several of the Hungarian and of the Norman nobility also became domesticated in Scotland, in the retinue of the princess Margaret and of her mother; and it is probable that their cultivation must have been a little in advance of the native Scotch.

But the civilisation which took its rise in Scotland

in the reign of Queen Margaret was eminently of a. Christian kind. It differed essentially from the artificial refinement of pagan nations in this, that religion was acknowledged as its foundation. The queen herself was a model of every virtue. Her first care was to purify her own conscience, and secure the Divine blessing on her plans for the improvement of her people, by living a holy life. She made choice of a prudent counsellor in matters relating to her soul, in a Benedictine monk of the name of Turgot, who was afterwards prior of Durham, and finally bishop of St. Andrews. With him she concerted her plans for making her high position advantageous to the people of Scotland. It was he who directed her in the exercises of piety and devotion in which she spent a great portion of her time. There are numbers of good people in the world, who have no conception of the pleasure it gives holy persons to pass a long time in prayer, and in the praises of God. Hence it is a common mistake to suppose that this shew of devotion is made for a purpose, or that historians and panegyrists have made much more of it than is at all consistent with the truth. But it generally happens that some proof of the reality of a saint's devotion is furnished by other and more active parts of his life. In the case of St. Margaret, although her daily prayers were long, her works of charity and of self-denial were arduous; and such works are accomplished only by hands that are every day stretched to

heaven, for strength greater than belongs to our feeble nature. Prayer was so sweet to her, that she grudged spending all the night in sleep. She often rose ere it was day, to unite her praise with the worship of those heavenly choirs where there is no night. The Psalter was an especial favourite with her; she recited the whole of it, with many tears, every day. There are few days, indeed, in the life of any one, in which the changing moods of the human spirit are not reflected in the language of these inspired poems. St. Margaret never omitted being present, every morning, at the holy sacrifice of the mass. She generally found time to hear several masses, before engaging in the business of the day. Although books were a rare and expensive luxury in those days, the queen contrived to procure a few of them for her spiritual reading. We are told, in particular, of a beautiful copy of the Gospels, which she valued very highly, and carried with her wherever she went. It was ornamented with gold and colours, and the capital letters were exquisitely illuminated. The king, her husband, was unable to read; but she inspired him with so much interest in all her pursuits, that he often looked into her prayer-books, and the rest of her little library; the rough man would even kiss a book of which he perceived the queen to be very fond; and sometimes he would give an order to have it bound handsomely for her use. As a consequence of the queen's love of pious reading, she enjoyed conversing

on religious subjects with some of her clergy, proposing questions for their solution, and often astonishing them with the depth and originality of her own thoughts.

To this extraordinary love of prayer and of pious reading, she united a penitential tone of mind, which prompted her to afflict her body with fasting, even beyond the rule imposed by the Church. For example, she prepared for the festival of our Lord's Nativity by a fast of forty days, just as the Church prepares for the festival of his Resurrection by the fast of Lent. The constant feebleness of her health might very well have excused her from duties of this kind, even from such as were of obligation; but her resolute will carried her through the performance of more than was required. Her repasts, too, were strictly in accordance with the same spirit of penitence. They were poor and spare, and barely sufficient to sustain nature, without gratifying her appetite.

Unhappily, the experience of daily life goes to shew that the practice of the severer virtues, such as these, does not necessarily promote among ordinary Christians the growth of the gentler and more amiable features of character. Human nature is so imperfect, among good people even, that we find every day censorious habits, suspicious tempers, irritable feelings, combined with a rigid performance of the severest duties of religion. But St. Margaret, like all the saints, kept her heart soft and tender by acts of mercy to the poor members

of Jesus Christ. To wait on poor persons at table, to wash their feet, and to send them away with a liberal alms, was a part of her daily occupation. During Lent and Advent, their numbers were very considerably increased. Her charity especially overflowed towards widows and poor orphan children; and she provided places where the indigent sick might be taken care of, and where she waited on them in person, as if in them she saw her Divine Lord and Master visibly represented. The expense incurred by all this daily outlay sometimes exceeded the means at her command; when that happened, she thought nothing of selling her own jewels and ornaments, and, with the king's permission, she now and then drew on the public treasury for sums of money which drained it of every farthing.

In that rude age, it was often impossible for the poor to obtain justice in their disputes between man and man. Their hardships in this respect did not escape the attention of the tender-hearted queen. She made herself the channel of appeal for them to the royal ear; she sat in public places to hear their grievances and inform herself about the merits of their cause. In a field about a mile from Dunfermline, on the road to Queensferry, the county maps of last century used to shew the position of a stone called St. Margaret's stone, on which she was alleged by a constant tradition to have sat, while she held those rude courts of appeal. The poorest could always obtain readier access to her

there, than in the interior of her palace. The stone itself was still to be seen, sixty years ago, and probably more recently still. We do not know whether it may not remain to this day.

Another form of mercy, to which the charity of the queen disposed her, belonged especially to the circumstances of that age. Wars between the English and the Scottish nations were very frequent. The hospitable welcome given by Malcolm to the refugees from the English court, provoked the hostility of the Conqueror, and brought an army across the border of the kingdoms. From time to time, hostilities were renewed with varying success on either side; and, as a consequence of this disturbed state of the country, Scotland contained many English prisoners of war, who became virtually the slaves of their captors. The queen employed commissioners to travel over the country, and observe which of those unhappy captives were subjected to the severest treatment. When her commissioners had made their report, she sent them down again with money, to purchase the freedom of her suffering countrymen.

St. Andrew's was then a place of great resort for pilgrims; and many of them were poor people, who suffered great hardships, both in their passage across the Frith of Forth and when they reached the shore, either in going or in returning. The queen, in consequence, erected houses for their reception on the

shores of the Frith, where they were provided, at her expense, with everything that they required. She also maintained a service of ferry-boats, for the gratuitous transport of poor pilgrims to the shrine of the apostle, and back again to their own homes.

CHAPTER IV.

Queen Margaret's munificence to churches.—Her influence over her husband. — She encourages ceremony at court. — She reforms public manners.—She promotes industry and commerce.

Munificence to the house of God is very nearly allied to the charity which cares for the living temples of his body. Apart, altogether, from the pious desire to lodge him, in his sacramental presence, in a manner not at least inferior to the palaces in which earthly sovereignty resides—a desire symbolised by the lavish act of Mary, when she anointed Jesus for his burial, and which the censorious traitor interpreted as a waste of precious materials—the poor are not robbed of the wealth which builds and adorns the temples of God. The poor, in the short intervals of their rest from toil, love to exchange their close and squalid abodes for the free air and the liberty of spacious churches; the poor feel the exchange more agreeable than the rich, who return to homes more luxuriously furnished than the church.

The poor also feel as if they had a kind of property in their churches; they seem almost to belong to them. The church is at least common ground, above the ordinary level of the world, on which they can meet their richer neighbours with something of an equality. All that a noble church expresses, all that is done there and foreshadowed there, is common to rich and poor; and the poor feel that, and in their hearts bless the founders of noble churches, as among their truest benefactors.

Such was doubtless the double motive of this holy queen, in her large contributions to the beauty of God's house. On the site of the humbler temple at Dunfermline, where she had been married and crowned, she erected a fine church, in honour of the blessed Trinity. The best decorations that the age afforded were bestowed upon it; the vessels used in the service of the altar were of solid gold. Mention is made, also, of a cross of exquisite workmanship, and profusely ornamented with jewels and the precious metals, with an image of our crucified Lord attached to it, which excited the devotion of every one who entered the queen's new church at Dunfermline. We must not confound with this crucifix another cross to which Queen Margaret had much devotion, and which, as we shall see by and by, she carried about with her on her journeys. This was long afterwards known as the Black Cross of Scotland; it was to lodge it worthily

that King David, the youngest son of Queen Margaret, built and endowed the abbey of Holy Rood, or Holy Cross, at Edinburgh.

The queen was also a great benefactor to the church of St. Andrew's, afterwards the metropolitan see of Scotland. There, too, she erected a cross which was long regarded with peculiar veneration. Her chamber was always filled with materials for church decoration and for the divine service; with censers, and copes, with chasubles, and stoles, and altar-cloths, and priests' vestments. Some of these were in the process of manufacture, others of them, when finished, were kept there for a while, to be looked at and admired; in short, the queen's workroom resembled the warehouse of a dealer in church ornaments.

St. Margaret also erected a small chapel near Roslin, three miles to the south of Edinburgh, in honour of St. Catherine of Egypt, whose body is related to have been buried on Mount Sinai. The ruins of this chapel, which were still visible late in the last century, gave their name to the neighbouring mansion-house, which is still called St. Catherine's.

Before Queen Margaret could effect so much for the honour of religion, it is clear that she must have gained very considerable influence over her husband. Although at first rude and illiterate, he was very tractable, and easily came into the views of his amiable queen. Her first success seems to have been in persuading him to

reform his life. The duties of justice, of purity, of charity, and of mercy, are precisely those in which a man raised only a few degrees above a savage would be most wanting; and in those duties he had before his eyes a daily model in Queen Margaret. She managed him so prudently as not to make her religion offensive to him, as too often happens from the indiscretion of pious people. Before Queen Margaret had done with her apt scholar, she had taught him both how to keep his conscience free from great sin, and also how to imitate her exercise of the works of mercy. She had taught him the value of prayer; so much so, that he was often induced to join his holy queen in the exercise of public devotion, for which she stole time from the hours of the night.

Margaret brought to her great task of civilising Scotland and its sovereign a larger worldly experience than his, which she had gained during long and familiar residence at courts considerably further advanced in civilisation. Knowing the value of a certain ceremoniousness in preserving the subordination of one rank to another, without which society falls into serious disorder, Margaret introduced greater state into her husband's court; she persuaded him to command the attendance of a guard of honour, when he appeared in public. State ceremonies were conducted with more decorum; when the king entertained his nobles, greater attention was paid to external propriety, both in dress

and in behaviour; and the sovereign and his guests were, for the first time, served in gold and silver. The whole tenour of the holy queen's life will plead for her, against any suspicion of ostentation in these new arrangements; they were designed with excellent tact, for the purpose of teaching her rude people, in a way which they could easily comprehend, the natural distinctions of rank, and the reciprocal duties of one order in society to another.

Her reforms at court went deeper than this. She chose only women of noble birth, and of unimpeachable character, for her attendants; she permitted no levity of manners among the young courtiers, in her presence. Her own manners were marked by a union of sweetness with reserve, which both attracted every one who approached her, and at the same time checked familiarity. Even when she was gayest, she never indulged in empty laughter; and when she was compelled to find fault, she never failed in dignity, even in the most provoking circumstances. Her influence, as may be imagined from this description, which we owe to one who knew her well, was very great. It repressed the licence of a half-civilised court, and maintained a high tone of propriety, probably new to her courtiers.

From the reign of this illustrious lady may be dated the earliest efforts of Scotland in commercial industry. She encouraged merchants to import, both by sea and from England, many and various kinds of goods, such as Scotland had never before known, more particularly in wearing-apparel of an ornamental kind; and this no doubt with a view to elevating the taste and the tone of her people; for, excepting the savage pomp of war, they were strangers to anything better than the squalid habits of their barbarian homes. We shall not attempt to decide the question, whether the invention of the Scottish tartan owes its origin to these efforts of Queen Margaret. Historians have said so; and the thing is very possible.

CHAPTER V.

The Queen's family.—Their later history.—The queen persuades the bishops to reform some abuses in religion.—She addresses them in council.—The Grace-Drink.

THE family of Queen Margaret consisted of six sons and two daughters. Their education naturally occupied much of the thoughts of their holy mother. Her active endeavours to train them up piously and usefully were sanctified by many secret prayers for success, and by many tears. Little or nothing of her method has come down to us, but this one significant fact, that, as in her lessons to her whole kingdom, the queen made subordination a constant rule in her family; she not only claimed deference and obedience from her children, for herself and for their father, but, in addi-

tion to this, she insisted on the younger giving precedence, on every occasion, to the elder. Thus, for example, when they went up to make their offering at mass, according to the custom of that day, she bade them go in the order of their ages, first the elder, and then the younger.

A very brief sketch of the later history of St. Margaret's children, will very well compensate for the scantiness of our knowledge as to her method of training them. Edward, the eldest son, was killed prematurely in battle; but not before he had lived long enough to win the affection and esteem of the whole nation. His death was regarded as the too early extinction of the brightest promise.

Ethelred, his next brother, died also in his youth. He had become a monk, died abbot of Dunkeld, and is mentioned in a monastic record as a man of venerable memory. His body is supposed to have been accidentally discovered in the church of Dunfermline, four centuries later, wrapped in silk, and in good preservation.

Regarding Edmund, the queen's third son, history varies considerably. According to one version of his story, he lived and died in a pious manner, in England, as a recluse; according to another, he failed in his duty for a time, but in the end expiated his fault by sincere repentance. In either case, the lessons of his mother were not lost upon him. Their influence would

appear stronger, if we adopt the supposition of his becoming a great penitent.

His fourth brother, Edgar, after an interval of a few years of anarchy in the kingdom, succeeded his father, Malcolm, and reigned happily nine years. His highest praise must be that, in his mild government, his equity, and his beneficence, nay, in the sweetness of his disposition, he reminded all men of Edward the Confessor. Alexander, his next brother, became King of Scotland at his death, and maintained the family character for justice, charity, and religion. He made munificent gifts to the Church. Among other benefactions, he founded a monastery on the Island of Inchcolme, in the Frith of Forth, out of gratitude for his preservation in a violent tempest, which had driven him on the little island, and had kept him there for three days, as the guest of a lonely hermit.

On his death, after a reign of seventeen years, David, the sixth and youngest son of the queen, began his long and prosperous reign of nearly thirty years. Circumstances enabled him, more perfectly than his brothers, to carry on the humanising and civilising policy of his mother: in her son David, the holy queen may be said still to have presided over the destinies of Scotland. The churchmen, and especially the monastic orders of that day, were much in advance of the rough fighting-men and the still rougher peasantry, in the arts of civilisation. David, therefore, by the munificent

encouragement which he gave to churchmen, largely promoted the objects so near his mother's heart in regard to Scotland. He died as he had lived, in a holy manner, and long enjoyed the local reputation of a saint, though he was never canonised by the Holy See.

Matilda, or Maude, the elder of St. Margaret's daughters, reflected her mother's virtues at the court of Henry I. of England, to whom she was married. Her love to the poor, and her devotion to the sick, resembled her mother's; she founded the hospitals of Christchurch in Aldgate, and of St. Giles', for their relief. Her subjects surnamed her The Good; and local English calendars mentioned her, too, as a saint. Her dust lies in Westminster Abbey, not far from St. Edward's. Her only daughter, Maude, was married first to the Emperor Henry V., and afterwards to Geoffrey, Count of Anjou; and by her second marriage she became the mother of Henry II. of England. Through her, our present gracious Queen, and many private English families, are lineally descended from St. Margaret.

The second daughter of the holy Queen of Scotland was named Mary, and became the wife of Eustace, Count of Boulogne, brother of the famous Godfrey, King of Jerusalem. She, too, left behind her a name for great piety and charity. If the proverb be true, that the end puts a crown on the work, Queen Margaret's education of her children was abundantly crowned in its successful issue.

An undertaking, more arduous than all of these, still lay before our holy queen, before she could say that she had finished the task assigned to her. That was nothing less than a reformation of abuses in religion. If we consider the lawlessness of the times, and the demoralising effect of the frequent wars that wasted the country, it will not appear surprising that something had to be corrected in religious observances. The general neglect of Sundays, and of the great festivals, seems to have been one of the most crying evils; as was also the frequent disuse even of the Easter Communion. Marriage with a step-mother and with a brother's widow had become not uncommon. Among lesser evils, the irregular time of commencing Lent appeared to St. Margaret a matter which called for reform; instead of commencing from Ash-Wednesday, or even earlier, as was the practice formerly in certain places, it had become the custom in Scotland to defer the beginning of the fast till after the first Sunday in Lent. To these and other matters of discipline, our holy queen could not be altogether indifferent. It is true, indeed, that she could not be regarded as responsible for them; but it seemed to her at least worth an effort to bring her own influence and her husband's to bear upon the persons whose peculiar province it was to correct such abuses. With this view she promoted the meeting of provincial councils of the clergy on several occasions. One of those was more than ordinarily remarkable, for the active part which Margaret

herself took in its deliberations. The Gaelic language was then the dialect of Scotland, but Margaret was ignorant of it; the king, therefore, who thoroughly understood both his own language and the Anglo-Saxon, which Margaret spoke, undertook to be the interpreter between the bishops and the queen. Margaret made a short speech to the assembled clergy, setting forth the abuses which called for amendment, with so much persuasiveness, as to engage her august audience at once to promote the reforms which she had so deeply at heart. The council, indeed, was not a large one; the number of sees in Scotland then amounted to no more than four; and it was part of the queen's scheme for the advancement of religion, to add two more sees for the northern part of her kingdom.

The neglect of saying grace at meals suggested to the holy queen a popular way of encouraging this act of natural piety. She introduced the custom, at the end of meals, of drinking to the health of those persons who had thanked God for his temporal mercies. This custom long survived her, under the name of the Grace-Drink, or St. Margaret's blessing.

CHAPTER VI.

Queen Margaret feels a presentiment of her death.—Malcolm goes to war with England, and perishes.—The Queen expires in Edinburgh Castle, and is buried at Dunfermline.

For nearly a quarter of a century Scotland had enjoyed the benefit of Queen Margaret's example. It was a period of some prosperity for the country, occasionally dashed by reverses in war with the overwhelming force of England. Yet when compared with the sorrowful youth of the queen, passed in a foreign land, and in a state of dependence on the goodwill of others, Margaret's married life may be accounted on the whole a fortunate time for her, in a worldly sense. But the scene once more changes, and the close of this holy lady's residence on earth is surrounded, like her youth, with gloom and storm. Her biographer has left us an affecting history of a conversation which she had with him, some time before the end, and in which she spoke openly to him of her presentiment of an early death. It was on an occasion when he was about to leave her to return to his monastery. She talked to him of all that had befallen her in life; and as she spoke, her tears flowed freely. It was impossible to take part in such an interview, without being moved to tears. They both of them wept; and for a time, neither spoke.

Then the queen resumed, bidding her spiritual adviser farewell,—"I shall not be long in this world," she said, "and you will survive me many years. Two requests I have to make; I beg you never to forget my soul in your masses and your prayers; and that you will love and care for my children, and will teach them to fear and to love God. If hereafter you should observe any of them too much elated with their high position, you will advise them, and, if necessary, reprove them, as a father and a teacher, dissuading them from offending their God by a love of money, and from the neglect of eternal happiness for the sake of earthly prosperity. These things I beg you will promise me to do, as in the presence of God, who is listening, as a third person, to our conversation." The good monk gave her his promise, through his tears; and they parted for ever in this world.

The son of the conqueror now reigned in England; and Malcolm took advantage of what seemed a favourable moment to renew the war on the border. A short interval of peace ensued; but a presumed invasion of Scottish rights in Cumberland again brought Malcolm into the field, in opposition to the express wish of St. Margaret, who, it seems, had a foresight of coming disasters. The queen, meanwhile, removed for security to the Castle of Edinburgh, a fortified stronghold, owing its origin to Edwin, the consort of St. Paulinus. A severe attack of illness left behind it a chronic

weakness, from which she never rallied. At first she was compelled to forego her favourite exercise of riding on horseback; later, she could seldom leave her bed. This state of langour continued for rather more than six months.

Four days before she breathed her last, she appeared sadder than usual, and remarked to her attendants that perhaps that day a greater calamity had befallen Scotland, than at any former period. They paid no particular attention to what she said, until, a day or two later, news arrived that the king had perished; then they remembered, too, how she had laboured to dissuade her husband from this fatal expedition.

On the fourth day after she had made this remark, she revived a little, and was able to attend mass in her oratory, where she received for the last time the most sacred body of our Lord. Scarcely was the service over, when she became much worse, and was put to bed. It was evident that her end was very near. Her face was deadly pale, and while the ministers of religion stood around, she entreated them to commend her soul to Christ. She sent for the black Cross, which she had always especially venerated; it was placed in her hands; and she kept looking at it, kissing it, and signing her face with it. Her hands and feet had become quite cold; still she prayed audibly, repeating the psalm *Miserere*, from beginning to end, holding the cross in both her hands.

At this critical moment, her son Edgar arrived from the seat of war, with the first intelligence of disaster. Entering his mother's chamber, he found a scene even more heartrending than he had left behind him. The queen, who seemed as if every moment might be her last, suddenly collected her strength, and asked her son for his father and his brother Edward. He feared to tell her the whole dreadful truth, and tried to evade her inquiries by answering that they were well. With a deep sigh she replied, "I know it all, my son; I know it all. I adjure you by this holy cross, by our near relationship, to tell me the whole truth." It was impossible for him to resist such an appeal; the young prince informed his mother that his father and his brother Edward had fallen in the neighbourhood of Alnwick, four days ago, and had been carried to Tynemouth, for interment.

The dying queen's reply was a memorable one. Raising her eyes and her hands to heaven, she exclaimed, "I return thee praise and thanks, O Almighty God, for inflicting on me so grievous a calamity in my last moments; it is the effect of thy will to purify me, by bearing it, from some sinful imperfections."

Death was now rapidly advancing. The thoughts of the saint reverted to the sacred mysteries of religion, with which the habits of her life-time had made her familiar. Her last thoughts were expressed in the words of the prayer in the liturgy, immediately before the communion. "O Lord Jesus Christ, who by the will of thy Father, and the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, hast given life to the world by thy death, deliver me"-her prayer was not finished on earth; with the words, Deliver me, on her lips, the weary pilgrim passed to her everlasting communion with the Author and the Finisher of her faith. Her spirit returned to God, so peacefully and so serenely, as to leave no doubt in the minds of her attendants that she had exchanged labour for rest, her exile on earth for her heavenly home. The excessive paleness of her countenance was succeeded by a rosy flush, such as those who loved her had sometimes seen there, while she was asleep; and even now they could hardly think that she was dead. The day was the 16th of November, 1093; and the number of her years was only forty-six.

A few days after the queen's holy departure, her precious body was carried to Dunfermline, amidst the tears and lamentations of her family and of the whole nation, and was interred near the altar of the Holy Cross, in the Abbey church which she had founded. "And there," to use the language in which her biographer, with much pathos, concludes her beautiful story, "there she rested, in the place which had so long witnessed her painful watchings, her prayers and her tears."

CHAPTER VII.

Beginning of devotion to Queen Margaret as a Saint.—Her Canonisation.—And Translation.—Her tomb a place of Pilgrimage.—Cross Hill.—What became of her body, after the Reformation.—Her head preserved, and sent to the Low Countries.—Her office inserted in the Roman breviary.—Changes in the day set apart for her festival.

Our account of this holy queen's life would be manifestly incomplete, without at least a short sketch of the rise and progress of the veneration in which her memory is now held, not only in Scotland, but wherever the Catholic faith is professed. We shall do our best to make it as brief and as exact as possible, premising, however, that the inquiry is beset with unusual difficulties as regards the dates of particular events. This is the first occasion on which a tolerably correct account of the subject has been gathered into one popular view.

As long as we find that the soul of the holy queen was publicly prayed for, we may presume that the opinion of her sanctity had not yet gained ground sufficiently to warrant her being regarded as a saint, in the strictest sense of the word. Now, five years after her death, we find her son Edgar founding an

Abbey at Coldingham "for the souls of his father, and of his mother," and of others. Fifteen years later than that, her son David founded another abbey, also for the souls of his father and mother. Hence, whatever private and even growing opinion there may have been about her sanctity, nothing had been determined, up to the date of 1113, that could authorise the omission of her name from such pious commemorations.

About thirty years after her death, however, we discover the first trace of the rising feeling towards St. Margaret, as a glorified Saint, in a grant of land to Coldingham, by a nobleman who made it "for the soul of King Malcolm, and his deceased sons." From that time, that is, a year or two after the accession of her son David to the throne, and onwards through succeeding reigns, we have tacit proofs of the same kind, to show that public opinion pointed to the lamented queen as to a holy soul for whom it were henceforth superfluous to pray, and for whom the honours of canonisation were probably in store.

All through the century succeeding her death, this opinion prevailed and gathered strength; other fifty years passed, and the time was come when Rome was to be requested to set its seal on the result of public opinion. William III, a descendant of the Saint, entered warmly into the cause; the abbot of Dunfermline was deputed to promote it, before the holy See. The bishops of Scotland added their unanimous tes-

timony, and the earnest prayers of both clergy and people expressed the universal desire to see their blessed queen raised to her place among the canonised. The cause was remitted to a commission of the bishops, to take evidence, and to report upon it. Their hearty co-operation made this part of the process a short and an easy one; and Innocent IV., in no long time, pronounced the decree of the queen's canonisation.

All eyes were now turned from Rome to the stone tomb in the abbey church of Dunfermline, where the holy remains had lain for a hundred and fifty-eight years. The king was there, and his mother the dowager queen Joan, sister of the English Henry III.; the bishops and abbots of the kingdom were in attendance, together with the great nobility, and a numerous deputation of the clergy and of the laity. The whole of the summer night, before the great day of Translation, was spent by the assembled multitude in prayer for the Divine blessing on the event of the next day. The 19th of June, 1251, dawned on Scotland, and an august procession passed into the abbey church. Bishops, and clergy, and mitred abbots were preceded by the Cross, and the waving censer, and were followed by the king and his court, and by a joyful multitude; bells without, and organs within the church accompanied the chanting of psalms and hymns, as the holy rite proceeded, and the bishops approached the tomb of the royal saint. It was opened, and her holy body was placed with great ceremony in a chest of silver, ornamented with gold and with precious stones. The church resounded with the invocation which has never since that day altogether ceased in Scotland,—Saint Margaret pray for us. It was the first public canonisation that Scotland had for many previous centuries witnessed; and, strange to say, it was the last.

The honoured tomb of the saint now became an object of frequent pilgrimage. As devout persons approached Dunfermline from the south, they reached a rising ground about a mile from the ferry which they had to cross, whence they gained their first view of the abbey church, the goal of their journey. It became a custom among them to pause here for a few minutes' prayer; a cross was erected on the spot, and gave the little knoll the name of Cross Hill, which it has retained even till our time. The steps of the cross might have been seen a very few years ago; perhaps they are still visible.

From the day of her Translation, previously to the era of the Reformation, two days were set apart every year to the memory of St. Margaret; one, the day of her decease, November 16th, and the other, at an early period, June 19th, the day of her translation. This second day, however, was changed to June 10th; at what time, or for what reason, historians are at a loss to say. One competent authority, indeed, suggests that it may have been in consequence of a second trans-

lation of the saint's head, which we know was at one time separated from her body, as was done with the relics of many saints.

When the storm of the Reformation swept away so much of what the "ancient Christianity" had taught men to revere, the body of St. Margaret disappeared from the church at Dunfermline, and the church itself became a ruin. From this time, we must regard the relic of the saint's head as entirely separated from her body. On the unsupported authority of the Scotch historian, Conn, it has been alleged that the holy body of the queen, together with the body of her husband, was removed, at the request of Philip II. of Spain, to the royal chapel in his new palace of the Escurial, near Madrid. It is added that they were enclosed in the same chest, with suitable paintings, and an inscription containing their names. It is sufficient to say that the late bishop Geddes, who spent ten years of his life in Spain, and was on terms of intimacy with many of the Spanish court, could never find any evidence of this translation of the royal bodies.

The head of St. Margaret we are able to trace with more certainty. It was removed from Dunfermline, in the first instance, to the Castle of Edinburgh, where the unfortunate Queen Mary thought herself happy to possess it. At the period of her flight into England, the sacred head was concealed in the Castle of Dury, by a Benedictine monk of that family. After thirty

years it passed into the possession of the Scotch fathers of the Society of Jesus, who deputed one of their number, F. Robb, to carry it over to Antwerp for greater safety. Its public veneration was sanctioned by the bishop in 1620. Three years afterwards, it was removed from Antwerp to the Scotch College at Douay, at that time under the charge of the Scotch Jesuits. The bishop of Arras, in the same year, publicly authorised its being treated as a true relic of the saint.*

Meanwhile the Scottish refugees at Rome were not idle in promoting the honour of St. Margaret, especially among their Catholic countrymen. Innocent X. (1645), first granted a plenary indulgence to the faithful on

* The relic of St. Margaret's head at Douay has a singular history attached to it. A Scotch Lady, of the name of Mowbray, presented the College with a rich silver bust, larger than life, and profusely ornamented with jewels, as a reliquary to contain the head of the saint. During the Commonwealth in England, the sons of Charles I. in their exile visited Douay, and asked to be shewn the relic of their illustrious ancestress.

Nearly a century later, when the jesuits were driven from France (1765), the reliquary disappeared from the Scotch College at Douay, and has never since been traced. The sacred relic, however, was not removed. It still adorned the College under the government of Scotch secular priests, until the great revolution laid the religion of France in ruins, (1793). The superiors, before their hurried departure from Douay, buried the head in their garden, hoping at some future day to return and claim it. But when the College was again visited by the Scotch, no trace of their valued relic could be found.

St. Margaret's day, which was then kept on the 10th of June. The office and mass of St. Margaret had been confined, up to this time, to the limits of her own kingdom. In 1673, her office was inserted by Clement X. in the Roman Breviary, June 10th, as a semi-double festival, with the option to all clergymen not Scotchmen to say the ferial office on the day, if they preferred it. The saint was at the same time declared to be Patroness of Scotland, second in order to St. Andrew the Apostle; and her festival was appointed to be kept in Scotland as a double of the second class. The Pope granted this extension of the saint's office to the petition of F. Aloysius Leslie, the Jesuit rector of the Scotch College in Rome, in conjunction with the agent of the Scotch Missionaries, and with the Baron Menzies of Pitfodels, who at that time represented the Duke of Muscovy at the court of Rome.

Soon afterwards, and probably with a view to making the virtues of the holy queen better and more generally known, F. Leslie published a short history of her life, in the Italian language.

The experience of a few years was sufficient to shew that some inconvenience attached to the celebration of St. Margaret's day on the 10th of June, owing to the frequent concurrence of some of the later movable festivals on the same day. Innocent XI. therefore transferred it to the 8th of July, (1678).

Another, and a final change in the day was made by

Innocent XII. (1693), at the instance of the unhappy James II. of England and his consort, who petitioned his Holiness to restore the saint's day to the 10th of June, the birthday of their no less unfortunate son, afterwards called by his adherents James III. of England. The pope at the same time renewed a decree of 1691, which had made the festival of St. Margaret no longer optional to the whole Church, but as henceforth of precept. Thus the final crown was placed on the devotion which for nearly six centuries had been gradually gathering round the Scottish queen.

CHAPTER VIII.

Memorials of St. Margaret in Scotland.—Her chapel in Edinburgh Castle.—Her well.—Queensferry.—Her altar in Rome.—Conclusion.

It still remains to describe, in few words, some of the principal memorials of this admirable lady, still lingering in the country which she once adorned by her virtues.

The picturesque old city of Edinburgh possesses nothing more deeply interesting than the Chapel of St. Margaret, in the Castle. Even if its style does not altogether warrant the opinion entertained by some persons, that it is the very same oratory as that in which St. Margaret made her last communion, the morning

of her death, it was certainly erected within a short time of that event, while the memory of the saint was still fresh in the country. This little treasure of architecture—for it is no less—had lain for years forgotten, until the intelligent research of Dr. Daniel Wilson, now professor at Toronto, laid open to the public as perfect an example of a Norman building as an antiquary could desire. It has been restored in very good taste; and no Catholic tourist should visit the capital of the north, without refreshing his devotion to St. Margaret by a visit to this little monument. It stands close to the spot whence her blessed spirit passed, so long ago, to the enjoyment of God.

A little to the eastward of Edinburgh there remains a holy well, still called St. Margaret's. The tradition which connects it with the saint has been lost; but it must evidently have been a place of popular resort in former times. The stone shrine in which it is enclosed is exquisitely designed and carved. It stands almost under the station of the North British Railway, called, from the well, St. Margaret's station.

The great north road, which, before the invention of the railway, connected the capital of Scotland with Perth and the Highlands, conducts the traveller to the margin of the Frith of Forth, nine miles from Edinburgh. A little town lies here, called Queensferry, from the circumstance of St. Margaret's constantly crossing the ferry at this place, on her journeys between Edinburgh and Dunfermline. On a modern cast-iron well, which supplies the public with water, the tourist may see the coat of arms belonging to the queen's family, and generally known as the arms of St. Edward.*

As the Catholic tourist has come so far, he may now cross the ferry, as St. Margaret used to do, and a drive of a very few miles further will bring him to Dunfermline, where she was married, where she worked out the task of her life, and where her remains rested in honour for nearly six hundred years. The abbey, as enlarged by her son David, is a noble ruin. The nave of the church stands, and the roofless frater-hall, or refectory of the monks. A visit to this place will suggest many reflections to any one who has learnt to know and value the memory of our blessed queen.

Her name is found attached to other places, all over the country: to a well in Lanarkshire, for example; to a bay on the coast of Fifeshire, and to a village in the Orkney Islands, called St. Margaret's Hope.

The beautiful little church of St. Andrew, belonging to the Scotch college in Rome, has three altars. The high altar is dedicated to the Apostle; the altar on the Gospel side of the church belongs to the Virgin-mother of Jesus; and opposite to it is the altar of St. Margaret.

^{*} A cross patonce, between five martlets (birds deprived of their claws and beaks).

The picture above it, attributed to the pencil of a Polish artist, represents the saint in her sorrowful suspense during the last absence of her husband. She kneels in her oratory, praying and weeping; her crown is laid aside; and far away we may discern the fatal issue of the day at Alnwick.

On reviewing the life of St. Margaret, one cannot fail to be struck with one pregnant fact. Her life was nearly equally divided between inactive suffering, and arduous and repulsive labour. Exile, comparative poverty, and vicissitude, occupied the first half of her life; the task of civilising a race of barbarians provided her with ample occupation of no easy kind, during the second. All was finished in her forty-seventh year. Whether in her earlier noviciate of humiliation, or in her maturer task, as Queen of Scotland, by redeeming the time, she made haste to enter into eternal rest. While we admire, let us learn to imitate. Let our tribute to her memory be the fruitful desire of an affection prompting us to follow the object of its regard.

NOTE.

THE author feels it to be due to his readers, not to take leave of them until he has very briefly indicated the sources of his information about St. Margaret; more especially as, in a work of this popular kind, foot-notes are out of place. In the first place, he has largely drawn upon the Life, written by Theodoric, the queen's confessor, afterwards a monk at Durham. Much of what this writer relates, he saw with his own eyes; the rest he obtained from other eye-witnesses. His story will be found in the Bollandist Lives (June 10). Besides this, the author acknowledges his obligation to a scarce tract, written by the late incomparable bishop Geddes, of whom this generation knows too little. Lastly, the author feels bound in justice to record, even in this inadequate manner, his debt to a learned Scottish priest who has devoted the unrequited labour of many years to St. Margaret's life, and who, it is sincerely to be wished, may be sufficiently encouraged ere long to give his learned collection to the world. For a full account of St. Margaret's Well, at Edinburgh, and of the recent disinterment of her chapel in the Castle, the reader is referred to Dr. D. Wilson's Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time.

THE

Life of Saint Elisabeth,

QUEEN OF PORTUGAL.

"Now thy brows are cold,

I see thee what thou art, and know
Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old."



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THE LIFE OF

ST. ELISABETH, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL.

CHAPTER I.

Parentage of Elisabeth.—She is born.—Receives the name of St. Elisabeth, her great-aunt.—She is affianced to the king of Portugal, and travels by land to her own kingdom.

When a son of St. Elisabeth of Hungary arrived, one day, as a page in the retinue of a certain prince, at the court of Queen Blanche, and of her son St. Louis, neither the king nor the queen, as we are told, could shew honour enough to the "dear St. Elisabeth," as she was represented by her youthful son. The queen called him to her, took him by the hand, kissed his brow, made him sit beside her, and spoke to him of his mother.

On the present occasion, not a son, indeed, but a grand-niece of the saint of Marburg claims our regard; and all the more powerfully, on account of the rarity with which either sanctity, or extraordinary intelligence is perpetuated in the blood. Forty years had passed since the holy princess of Thuringia had been taken early to her rest, when another Elisabeth

was born, to revive the name and the memory of her who had fallen asleep at Marburg. Andrew, king of Hungary, the father of the elder St. Elisabeth, had a younger daughter, Violanta, by his second marriage, who became the wife of James, king of Aragon, called The Conqueror. Their reign was a fortunate one; the king doubled his possessions by the acquisition of Valentie and the Balearic Islands; he also acquired Murcia, as the price of his assisting King Alphonso of Castile against the Moors. His son, Peter, the Infante of Aragon, married Constantia of Sicily, a grand-daughter of the Emperor Frederic II.; and their youngest child was the second St. Elisabeth, the subject of this memoir.

Her birth occurred in 1271, during the life of her grandfather. Her only sister had already received the name of her grandmother, Violanta; the saint of Hungary had been canonised about forty years before; the parents of our little princess, therefore, thought that they could not do better than keep the name of Elisabeth in the family; so it was given to their little darling, at the font, no doubt with the expectation that her great-aunt would not be forgetful of her, in heaven.

At the time of her birth, her grandfather King James and her father the Infante Peter were not on speaking terms. It seems, however, that the old king took a great fancy to his little grand-daughter, and predicted that she would surpass all the ladies of the house of Aragon. At the same time he made up his quarrel with his son Peter; and, five years later, finished his long reign, leaving the father of our little princess king of Aragon. She was old enough to remember, in later years, seeing two kings and three queens following her grandfather's remains to their place of sepulture at Poblete.

When the young Elisabeth was nine years of age, Alphonso, king of Portugal, dying, was succeeded by his son Dionysius. One of the earliest acts of his reign was to dispatch ambassadors to the court of Aragon, to solicit the hand of the princess Elisabeth, as his affianced bride. It so happened that they found ambassadors from two other courts, arrived on the same errand. Edward I. of England wished to secure our young princess for his son; and Charles, king of Sicily, was a suitor, on behalf of his son Robert, who afterwards married Violanta, the elder sister of Elisabeth. It was with the greatest difficulty that her father could bring himself to part with his little favourite. Her sweetness of disposition was such, that he considered her very presence in his house a source of blessing to it, which he could ill spare. Even at this tender age, Elisabeth could not conceal her love of prayer and of almsgiving.

State policy and the remonstrances of his counsellors at length compelled her father to make an election for her, among her suitors. He determined that a king actually reigning was a more eligible match for his daughter than the heir-apparent to a throne; perhaps, too, the fact that Portugal was the nearest of the three kingdoms, may have helped him in his decision, as it promised him a better chance of sometimes seeing his beloved child. It seems, also, that she was related to both the English and the Sicilian princes, within the forbidden degrees, and her father declined the expense of procuring a dispensation from Rome. The matter was therefore decided in favour of Dionysius, king of Portugal. It was a barbarous kind of way, no doubt, of disposing of the future happiness of a mere child; but it was the custom of the age, and, indeed, of much later times, especially among persons of high rank. Nor, after all, are we quite so sure that if things were looked into very narrowly, matches, quite as summarily made, would not be found, even now, and among persons of very middling rank indeed.

The next step in the business was to send away the young queen to the court of her future husband. But now the question arose, How should she be sent? A land-journey, through a country devastated by war, appeared to the Portuguese ambassadors rather too great a risk to run; it was therefore proposed to send the bridal party by sea. On farther consideration, this was thought to be decidedly the more dangerous way of the two; so a land-journey through Valencia

and Castile, was resolved upon. The bishop of Valencia, and a company of nobles and of knights, escorted the young queen, and her train of maids of honour, and of ladies in waiting. Her trousseau was of the costliest description. What became of it, we shall see by and by.

At a certain point in the journey, the king took an affectionate leave of his favourite child. He called himself the most unfortunate of men, to be thus robbed of his dearest treasure in life. He blessed her over and over again, adding that he had imparted to her all the advice he had to give; and that in gifts of mind as well as in disposition and manners, she left him nothing to desire. And so they parted; the little queen continuing her journey, with her maids and her ladies, surrounded by a cavalcade of Aragonese and Catalonian knights. On the confines of Portugal, they were met by a brother of king Dionysius, and by another cavalcade of Portuguese nobles and knights, to whom the Aragonese consigned their treasure. At Francoso king Dionysius was waiting to receive his bride; their nuptials were celebrated, and a settled provision made for the royal maintenance of the queen. Yet it was barely eleven years since the name of St. Elisabeth had been given her at the font.

CHAPTER II.

The young queen's daily life.—Birth of a daughter, and of a son and heir.—Frequent wars.— Elisabeth is a peace-maker.
—Conference of kings at Turiaso.—Death of her daughter Constantia.—Story of the hermit.—War between the king of Portugal and his son the Infante.—Elisabeth is deprived of her income.—She makes peace several times between her husband and her son.

This tender young creature, thus early assigned so conspicuous a position, began her new life by making such arrangements as should divide her time between her domestic duties and the service of God. Instead of the inexperience of eleven years, people seemed to see a degree of wisdom not often found even at five and twenty, or at thirty years. When she was not hearing mass, or reciting the canonical hour of prayer, she was spinning among her maidens and her ladies; or she was doing something for the poor, or trying to set people right who had fallen into trouble, or become the victims of oppression. The income which the king had settled on her found its way, in great part, into the hands of the poor, and into convents, and the houses of decayed ladies who were too high spirited to beg.

In her eighteenth year, her first child, Constantia, was born. Three years afterwards, the kingdom was

rejoiced by the birth of an heir to the throne, at Coimbra. Alphonso, the young Infante of Portugal, afterwards married Beatrix, a daughter of Sancho, king of Castile. This young princess was, like her mother-in-law, sent as a child to the Portuguese court, and educated by Elisabeth as her future daughter.

King Dionysius, although kind and indulgent to his queen, was still more indulgent to himself, and led an irregular life, to the great injury and sorrow of Elisabeth. Her greatness of soul was never more remarkably evinced than in her way of managing him. She appeared blind and deaf to all that she disapproved of in her husband, never listening to stories about him, and never reproaching him. She had calculated well in her estimate of his character. Reproaches would only have hardened him; whereas her silence affected him with remorse for his ingratitude; and her forbearance was rewarded by his abandoning the irregular practices of which she had never complained, but to God.

There were in those days rather too many small kings in the limited area of the Spanish peninsula, to permit the country long to enjoy the blessings of peace. And, failing an independent sovereign to quarrel with, any one of the four peninsular kings was ready, on the shortest notice, to go to war with his brothers, or even with his eldest son. If a king of Aragon failed to find in his next neighbour of Navarre, or of Castile, an

enemy ready to his hand, he had always his son, the Infante, to pick a quarrel with. If a king of Portugal found all of his three neighbours too pacific for his wishes, his father's sons were nearer home, and more at his mercy. The life of kings was too generally one long brawl, continued at the ruinous expense of the country and of their unhappy subjects.

One of the cases which we have mentioned actually happened, within no long time after Elisabeth's coming to Portugal. Her husband and his brother Alphonso went to war with each other, and much blood would have been wasted in the quarrel, had not Elisabeth engaged the good offices of the counsellors and prelates of the kingdom to make up matters between the brothers. And further to facilitate the business, she gave up the part of her revenue which she drew from the town of Cintra, and persuaded the king in other ways to increase the income of his brother.

Constantia, her eldest daughter, became the wife of Ferdinand IV., king of Castile (1301). The throne of Aragon was then filled by Elisabeth's brother, James. War, almost as a matter of course, was engaged in, by those two sovereigns, against each other. Its nominal cause was a dispute about the possession of certain towns and lands of which the Moors had been deprived. The art of making peace, in which Elisabeth excelled, was again put in requisition; her efforts were seconded by the imminent risk

of an attack from the Moors, while the Christian forces were destroying each other. Our gentle queen prevailed on the belligerents to meet at Turiaso, a town on the confines of Aragon and Castile, and to submit their claims to the arbitration of the king of Portugal. Elisabeth accompanied her husband to the conference (July, 1304); the queens of Castile and of Aragon also repaired to the place of meeting, attended by the flower of the nobility of both kingdoms. It was quite a family meeting for Elisabeth. She found her brother of Aragon, and she met her daughter of Castile. Her spirit of peace pervaded the proceedings of the conference; the decision of Dionysius gave satisfaction to all parties; new alliances were formed, and the assembly dispersed in perfect harmony. Elisabeth and her husband, however, prolonged their absence from home until September. returning to Portugal in time for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. It is in allusion to her repeated successes in hushing the storm of war, that Elisabeth is called in her office in the Roman Breviary the Mother of Peace, and of her country.

The next incident in her family history is the marriage of her son Alphonso with Beatrix of Castile, a sister of Ferdinand IV. The event was celebrated at Lisbon, with great rejoicing (1309). In no long time after, however, our queen had to mourn the premature decease of her daughter Constantia, queen of Castile.

A singular tale is related, in connexion with this sad event. Elisabeth and her husband happened, soon afterwards, to be travelling from Santarem to Lisbon, and on the way they stopped at Azambuja. Here the queen was met by a hermit, whom no one knew, and who cried out, In the name of God, my royal lady, I pray you to grant me an audience; for I have something important to tell you, and your attendants will not permit me to approach you. The queen having invited him to deliver his message, he went on to say that her deceased daughter Constantia had appeared to him in his cell several times, and had enjoined him to inform her mother of her detention in purgatory, and to beg that a mass might be said daily for her, for one year. The hermit had said this loud enough for the courtiers to hear. When he had finished, they began to chaff him, and to say, If Queen Constantia is in purgatory, is it a likely thing that she should appear to thee, rather than to her father or her mother? The hermit, meanwhile, disappeared; no one could give any account of him, and he was never seen again. Elisabeth, on conferring with her husband, resolved to act on the instructions she had received. She engaged a pious priest, of the name of Mendez, to say mass for her daughter, daily, for a year. At the expiry of the time fixed, Elisabeth was at Coimbra, and one night had a dream about her daughter, who appeared to her in white clothing, and

thanked her for procuring her deliverance from the penal flames of purgatory. Elisabeth had quite forgotten that the year was expired, until Mendez came, next morning, to remind her of it, and to speak about continuing to say mass. She was much comforted about her beloved daughter, and gave thanks to God.

A few more years brought back the miseries of war; and, this time, the king of Portugal found an enemy in his eldest son, the Infante Alphonso. Secret measures were taken by the king to surprise his son at Cintra, in the night-time; not even Elisabeth was made privy to the scheme. She was first alarmed by her husband's suddenly leaving her in the night, at Lisbon, and setting out, attended by troops; and at once suspecting the truth, she managed to dispatch a courier to Cintra, who rode faster than the soldiers, and reached it in time to give the young prince warning. He thus escaped from the trap laid for him, and went straight to Lisbon, to his mother, whom he had not seen for a long time. The queen kept him with her for a while, and spoke to him very seriously of his duty to the king, his father; and so dismissed him.

The most violent of the king's counsellors instigated him to punish this interference of the queen's as virtually abetting the young prince in his rebellion. Dionysius, still smarting under his late disappointment, too readily listened to the evil counsels of his courtiers, and sent Elisabeth an order to remove at once to

Alanguera, at the same time depriving her of all her sources of income. This bitter trial found our holy queen prepared for the will of God. She at once obeyed the peremptory orders of her husband, and abandoned her court at Lisbon. Presently, numbers of the nobility flocked to her new residence, to offer her their castles for a home, and their swords to regain her rights. She thanked them very graciously for their good intentions, but declined all their offers, alleging her resolution to remain at the absolute disposal of the king. So dismissing her impetuous defenders, she collected about her a number of pious women, who passed their time with her, in fasting and abstinence, in prayer and the public recitation of the praises of God. By and by, her humility and *moderation were acknowledged by the king, and she was restored to her rights as his queen.

But the war with the Infante still continued, to the bitter grief of the queen. Coimbra was held by her son, and his father was besieging it. Elisabeth had influence enough to bring about a meeting between them at Lieria, where the prince made an apology for his conduct, renewed his fealty to his father, and received back his income.

Jealousies subsequently arising again between them, the king rode out of Lisbon one day, to meet his son, and to forbid him to enter the city. The result was a fight between their respective followers. Elisabeth, hearing of it, rode out on a mule, into the thickest of the fray; none of her ladies ventured to follow her, yet she pushed on alone, through the storm of darts and stones, till she found the king; and then to the other side, in quest of the prince. She brought them once more together; the young Infante submitted, and kissed his father's hand; the king gave him his blessing, and so they parted, finally reconciled, at the instance of this heroic lady.

CHAPTER III.

The queen's religious observances.—Her love of fasting.—Her charities.—Her industrial school at Santarem.

The practice of religious duties was by no means the least arduous part of Elisabeth's daily life. She carried it far beyond the limits of mere obligation, impelled to what must appear to many good people to have been excessive, by the ardour of her devotional feeling, and by her profound spirit of penitence. Not satisfied with reciting the Divine Office every day, as it is in the Breviary, this holy queen also daily recited the Office of the Blessed Virgin and of the Dead. She carried about with her on her journeys, a portable oratory, in charge of her chaplains and her clerks, who chanted high mass every day in her presence. She also

attended the service of vespers, every afternoon, in her oratory.

But the extent to which she carried the practice of fasting seems to belong rather to the cloister of a severe order than to the court of a reigning sovereign. During her husband's life she was not permitted to carry the severity of her practice as far as she wished, but was obliged to restrict herself to three fast days in the week, and to Lent and Advent, and the eves of saints. When she became free to follow her own inclination in this respect, she kept every Friday and Saturday in the year, and the vigils of the Apostles, of the Holy Virgin, and of the saints to whom she had a special devotion, as fast-days, on bread and water. In like manner, besides Advent and Lent, she observed an additional Lent in the year, from St. John Baptist's day (June 24) to the Assumption; and yet a third, called the Lent of the Angels, from the Assumption till St. Michael's day. There could not have been thirty days in the year on which she tasted anything better than bread and water.

Her piety also frequently incited her to visit holy places, and churches served by religious communities distinguished for their devout lives. The poor in the neighbourhood of these places, and all along the road to them, reaped a rich harvest from her bounty at such times; indeed, such was the reputation of her sanctity, that many persons used to feign poverty for

the occasion, in order to receive a trifle from her hands. The queen was a constant visitor of the sick, smoothing their pillows for them, and prescribing for their maladies, for she had some skill that way. Among her poor friends, she manifested especial compassion for those who were too highspirited or too shy to ask for alms; she said that they were often worse off than the poor; and many of them she had the happiness of restoring to competence and their former position in society. She conferred many favours on poor young women, by clothing them, and settling dowries upon them to facilitate their marriage. And all this was accomplished with as much secrecy as was possible. For this holy lady shrank from the whisper of her own praises.

In her many journeys about her kingdom, no sick or poor person and no prisoner had to complain of being overlooked by the queen in her charities and her alms. Nor among the useful applications of her income did she refuse to reckon assistance given to various public works; such as churches, hospitals, bridges, and fountains. Nothing, in short, that had for its object the good of her people, failed to secure her co-operation.

During Holy Week, she redoubled her alms and her works of mercy. On Maunday Thursday, she washed the feet of poor women; the following day, she distributed alms among a multitude of the poor; and while attending the services of Good Friday, she manifested the grief of her soul at the remembrance of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. The practice of frequently communicating was not so common as it is now; we must therefore not be surprised to be told that Elisabeth received holy communion only three times in the year, at Christmas, Easter, and at Pentecost. It would be well if some of our daily communicants approached a little more nearly the perfection of her Christian life.

Among the religious foundations which owed their endowment to the charity of the queen, there was one which has an especial interest for us, as it seems to have anticipated the application of industrial training to the education of poor children,—a principle which has received the highest sanction in our own day. The bishop of Eidania, an episcopal see afterwards translated to Guarda, had begun to build an hospital for the poor foundlings, in the town of Santarem; but finding himself on his death-bed before the hospital was finished, he entreated the queen to take it under her patronage, and fulfil his intentions, for the love of God. Elisabeth readily undertook the duty thus bequeathed to her. The hospital was enlarged, and more amply endowed; and became the home of poor foundlings. When the queen went down to visit them, she served them at table with her own hands.

Under her directions, as soon as the children were

old enough, they were taught useful trades, by which they might earn their livelihood; and as soon as they were able to do so, they ceased to be a burden on the house, until they fell sick, when the hospital again took charge of them.

CHAPTER IV.

The king dies.—The queen goes to Santiago.—Builds a convent at Coimbra, and resides near it.—Her daily life.—She goes to Estremoz, to make peace, and dies.—Her tomb.—Her canonisation.—Miracle of the Roses.—Tale of Fridolin.

Such was the tenour of our holy queen's married life, until it pleased God to deprive her of her husband. During the long illness which preceded his death, the queen waited on him like a domestic servant, discharging the duties of a sick nurse with unwearied affection. He died, at last, in the castle of Santarem, when the year 1325 was hardly a week old; and was buried at the Cistercian convent of Odivellas, which he had founded, near Lisbon.

In the first hour of her widowhood, Elisabeth assumed the dress of a Franciscan nun. The following summer she made a pilgrimage to Santiago, in time to keep the festival of the apostle St. James at his tomb. At high mass on that day, celebrated by the archbishop, the queen offered her royal crown, together

with robes of the most costly kind, which she had worn at state ceremonies, the richest drinking vessels of her table, and stuffs of untold value from the looms of Portugal and of Aragon. On her return from the tomb of the apostle, she attracted vast crowds of people about her; for her reputation had preceded her, and they flocked together to see her as she passed. In going to Santiago she had avoided this, by keeping her destination secret, till she was almost within sight of the place.

At the expiry of a year from the king's death, Elisabeth is found at the convent of Odivellas, celebrating his anniversary, in company with the young king Alphonso, her son, and the nobility and clergy of the kingdom. Returning to Coimbra, where she then chiefly resided, she gave directions to have all her silk dresses, some of them richly interwoven with gold, cut up, and made into vestments, for distribution among the churches, according to the poverty of their wardrobes. Her gold plate was also broken up, to make chalices, crosses, thuribles and lamps. The remainder of her jewels she divided between her daughter-in-law Queen Beatrix, and her grand-daughters, Queen Mary of Castile, and Queen Eleanor of Aragon.

The queen had lately commenced a great undertaking at Coimbra; a convent for the nuns of St. Clare. We are told that she was an excellent judge of architecture, and frequently made suggestions which were found to improve her architect's plans. While the building was in progress, she gathered around her a few pious women, who wished to devote themselves to the service of God, and in due time to enter the convent. Among them was a lady of royal blood, a cousin of the queen's, who took a large fortune with her into the convent, and became its second abbess. church was the first part of the work that was finished. It was named after St. Clare, the disciple of St. Francis. The queen directed that her own tomb should be prepared in it. The completion of the refectory, the dormitory, the infirmary, and the kitchen soon followed, and the whole was surrounded with a high wall. In the immediate neighbourhood of the convent, a suitable residence was built for the queen and her attendants, and close to it a chapel, and two hospitals, one for fifteen poor men, and the other for a similar number of poor women.

When the whole establishment was finished, the queen took serious counsel with her advisers, as to her own future life, whether she would do better to enter the convent herself, or remain without, dispensing her charities among numbers of the indigent. Her advisers represented to her, that in the circumstances of the case, she would do more good by serving God in the world. She at once resigned her favourite plan of becoming a daughter of St. Clare, and made her arrangements accordingly. The day when the nuns

took possession of their new convent, Elisabeth and her daughter-in-law, Queen Beatrix, by special permission obtained from Rome, were present in the refectory. When the nuns were all seated, the queens carried their food from the kitchen, and served it to them at table.

Elisabeth then took up her residence in the new buildings close by. She spent much of her time in the church and among the nuns, singing the Divine Office with them every day, and encouraging them in the service of God. The neighbouring hospitals supplied her with many opportunities of active duty among the sick. This mode of life began about six years after her husband's death.

Let us follow her through one of her ordinary days. Five of the nuns of St. Clare resided with her; she rose with them before dawn, to recite matins, lauds and prime. After prime, they prepared the altar in the queen's private oratory, for mass. When this private mass was finished, the queen repaired to the chapel of her residence, where two high masses in succession were sung in her presence, her household also attending. One of these masses was always a mass of requiem for the soul of her husband. By the time that they were finished, and the rest of the Hours sung, it was the hour for going to dinner.

After dinner the queen gave audience to all sorts of people, who had business with her; to the superintendents of her works in various places, to religious or to secular persons, who had petitions to present; in short, to all, whether rich or poor, who had a mind to address her on any subject. The principles of the largest charity regulated her reception of persons who frequented her levees.

In the afternoon, vespers were sung in her chapel; and when it was not a fast-day (which was not often), the queen went to supper. This repast was immediately followed by Complin, and the Office of the Dead. Then she retired to her bed-chamber, and her nuns and her household to theirs. But this pious soul did not retire to sleep. She generally spent the greater part of the night in meditation and prayer, and often rose from bed to resume her spiritual exercises. So strong is the yearning of holy souls towards that place where their communion with their Lord is subject to no interruption from the demands of nature for repose; where there is no night, because there is no weary body to repair, no exhausted spirits to renovate.

The last year but one of her life the queen once more visited the tomb of St. James at Santiago; but this time she went on foot, with few attendants, dressed like a poor pilgrim, and begging her way along the road, from house to house, both going and returning;—an astonishing effort for a woman sixty-four years of age. By this means she escaped the

crowds which had distressed her humility on her former journey.

A great opportunity for the inexhaustible charity of the queen occurred, while she was residing at her convent, near Coimbra. Her kingdom was visited by a famine, which destroyed numbers of the poor. The liberality of Elisabeth was so profuse, in her efforts to mitigate the sufferings of her people, as to provoke the remonstrances of her attendants that she left nothing for herself and her household.

The latest act of her beautiful life was faithful to the spirit of peace which it had been her mission, for more than fifty years, to propagate among the crowned heads of the Spanish peninsula. The rumour reached her in her retreat at Coimbra that her son, Alphonso of Portugal, was about to plunge the kingdom in the disasters of war, in consequence of a quarrel with her grandson, Alphonso of Castile. Her immediate impulse was to sacrifice the calm routine of her life, and set out at once in search of the belligerents, with the intention of using her old influence to promote peace. Her attendants urged the inexpediency of her undertaking a long journey, during the hot season, and at her advanced age. But in such a cause no difficulties could turn her from her purpose. In this her last effort she received the crown of her many virtues.

She had got as far as Estremoz when the king, her

son, met her: but here she was taken ill with a tumour in her arm. On the Monday after, she was unable to rise for mass, Queen Beatrix, her daughter-in-law, attended her very carefully, rallying her spirits, and doing all she could to cheer her mother, and alleviate her sufferings. While Queen Beatrix was sitting by the invalid's bed, Elisabeth suddenly turning to her companion, said, "My daughter, pray give place to this lady who is coming." "What lady, my august mother?" was the answer of Beatrix, who saw no one. "That is she," rejoined the sick queen, "who is coming to me, in a white dress." Still Queen Beatrix could see nothing. Neither did Elisabeth say more; they were therefore left to conjecture that the Mother of Jesus was near, to comfort her sick daughter, who had always cherished a warm affection for the Queen of Angels.

On the Thursday the queen saw her confessor early in the morning, and heard mass in her chamber. When it was finished, she rose without assistance, and went out of her chamber to the altar where her confessor was then saying mass, and kneeling down she received holy communion with great devotion and many tears. In the afternoon of the same day, she was conversing with the king, after vespers, and as the physicians maintained that there was no danger in her complaint, she begged her son to leave her and go to supper. He had supped already; but he went outside

the door of her chamber with the physicians. While they were standing outside the door, the queen rose from her bed, and stood leaning against it; all of a sudden she began to sink. Her attendants called the king, who ran in, took his mother's hands and kissed them. She presently recovered a little, spoke of her fainting, and conversed awhile with the king about the princess Eleanor, her favourite grandchild, and about all her grandchildren. While they were conversing, the queen feeling her end approaching began to pray-" Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, protect me from my enemy, and receive me in the hour of my death." She then repeated the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and other prayers; and as she went on, she grew fainter and fainter, till her words were no longer audible. Thus, still praying, she ended her life of prayer in the castle of Estremoz, on Thursday, July 4th, 1336.

She had often entreated our Lord that her son might be present at her death, and even this little favour was granted her. When her holy soul had departed, her eyes and her mouth are said to have closed of their own accord.

Next day the funeral train set out to convey her precious remains to her convent at Coimbra. The journey occupied seven days, and it was regarded as something more than a natural occurrence, that, notwithstanding the great heat, the body of the queen exhibited no signs of decay on its arrival at its last resting-place. It was laid with great ceremony in the tomb which the queen in her lifetime had prepared for it, among her nuns.

Many instances of divine interposition are recorded, in behalf of devout persons who visited that tomb, during the two following centuries. It was reserved for Leo X. at the instance of Emmanuel, king of Portugal, to permit the public honours due to a saint to be paid to Elisabeth within the city and the diocese of Coimbra; a privilege which was confirmed by Paul IV. and extended to the whole of Portugal.

The inquiries set on foot by the eminent biographer of Saints, the Carthusian Surius, for his Lives, seem to have much promoted the knowledge and the honour of Elisabeth both in Portugal and throughout the Catholic world; in fact, the collections made for him ultimately became the basis of the process of her canonisation. In 1612, the tomb of the saint was opened in presence of a commission of inquiry, consisting of clergymen and of medical men, and the body was found to be incorrupt. The decree of her canonisation was finally pronounced by Urban VIII., 1625. Innocent XII., seventy years later, changed the day of her festival to the 8th of July, on which it is now universally kept, and made the recitation of her office of obligation throughout the church. The beautiful

office in the Roman breviary is attributed to the pen of Urban VIII. himself.

St. Elisabeth is perhaps best known out of her own kingdom by the miracle of the roses—a legend which is, however, not found in the oldest biography, and which is also attributed to St. Elisabeth of Hungary, and to B. Germain Cousin, the Shepherdess of Toulouse, lately beatified. The legend relates, that on one occasion, wishing to conceal from her husband the alms she was distributing to a number of poor persons, her lap was found to be full of roses, in the winter time. Another anecdote is recorded of her, which must be familiar to some of our readers, in Schiller's tale of Fridolin. It is to the following effect:

A courtier, desirous of making mischief between Elisabeth and the king, accused her of too great intimacy with a young page. The king believed the tale, and prepared a terrible punishment for the youth. Orders were given to the workmen about a smelting furnace, to throw into the boiling metal the first messenger who should come to them from the king, on a particular morning. The page was accordingly directed to go to the furnace, and ask the men if the royal order had been obeyed. As he hastened to it, unconscious of his fate, he heard a chapel bell in the forest tinkling for mass. He paused, entered the chapel, and served the mass. The king, meanwhile, impatient to hear that his orders had been obeyed,

dispatched the accusor of the page to the furnace, to make inquiry. He reached it before the young man had left the chapel, was seized by the workmen, in obedience, as they imagined, to the king's orders, and amidst vain struggles and protests was hurled into the lake of molten metal. When the page arrived, he was informed that the king's commands had been obeyed; and he hastened back with the message, to the horrer and confusion of his master.

— The count stood still, an icy chill Crept o'er each shaking limb:

"But Robert to the wood I sent— Hast thou not met with him?"

"No trace of Robert, sir, I saw, By wood or field or road!"

"Now," cried the count in sudden awe,
"This is the hand of God!"

With gentler mien than his wont had been His servant's hand he took, And he led him to his wondering wife With a chang'd and thoughtful look:

"This child is pure and clean of heart— No angel purer is:

Though I was led by treacherous art, God and his hosts are his!"

Schiller.

NOTE.

The reader who desires more particular information, will find it in the Life of the Saint, edited by Father Conrad Janning, S. J., Acta SS. Bolland., July 4th. The author of this Life, though anonymous, is presumed to have been nearly contemporary with the Saint. The MS. written in Portuguese, was found in the convent of St. Clare, at Coimbra. The learned notes of F. Janning must be received with caution, where they refer to English history; as for example, where he makes Edward IV. to reign from 1273—1307; and Edward VI., the Sovereign of England, at the queen's death in 1336! Edward I. and Edward III. would have been nearer the truth.

In Portugal, as in Spain, the name of Elisabeth, by a slight transposition of letters, is frequently called Isabella: Elisabe—Isabella.

THE

Life of Saint Clotildis,

QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

"THE BEST THINGS THAT THE BEST BELIEVE
ARE IN HER FACE SO BRIGHTLY WRIT,
THE FAITHLESS, SEEING HER, CONCEIVE
NOT ONLY HEAVEN, BUT HOPE OF IT."

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THE LIFE OF

ST. CLOTILDIS, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

CHAPTER I.

Rise of the Franks.—Clovis is their chief.—St. Remi.—Clovis marries Clotildis of Burgundy.—Her narrow escape.

THE cradle of the German tribe celebrated in history as the Franks, or the Freemen, lay to the east of the Rhine, in the country bounded by the Maine and the Weser, and now divided into Nassau, Hesse-Cassel, Westphalia, and part of Hanover. Two centuries and a half after Christ, they are found making frequent excursions across the Rhine, partly in search of plunder, partly of adventure. The Roman governors of Gaul had enough to do to keep them at bay, and were often glad to bargain for their services, as an advanced guard along the Rhine, to oppose the savage tribes lying to the eastward, the Vandals, the Goths, and the Huns. These hordes at length grew irrepressible, and the Franks were gradually pushed westwards before them. The last part of Gaul that remained in possession of the Romans lay to the north of the river Loire, between the Rhine and the German ocean. To the south of the Loire the rising kingdom of Burgundy occupied the eastern part, and the Gothic tribes the western and southern parts of modern France and the Mediterranean shore.

The German tribe of the Franks by degrees overran the whole of the country between the Rhine and the Atlantic, and gave the name of France to the ancient Gallia of the Romans. As a race, however, they seem to have been chiefly confined to the modern countries of Holland and Belgium, and that part of France lying to the north of the Loire. Their other possessions, to the south of that river, partook more of the nature of a military occupation. As a race, they never fully absorbed into their own, the incongruous tribes, which were forced to yield to their arms.

The transition of the Franks from a predatory tribe into a rising nation must be assigned to the period of Clovis I., the founder of what is called the Merovingian race of kings, from their military eminence, towards the close of the fifth century (486.) On the death of his father at Tournay, then the chief seat of the tribe, Clovis found himself at their head, and although still very young, he soon made the name of the Franks terrible to his neighbours. His first great success was at Soissons, where he dealt a fatal blow to the declining power of the Romans beyond the Alps, and compelled Syagrius, the governor of Gaul, to take

refuge at Toulouse with Alaric, chief of the Visigoths. Flushed with success, Clovis sent an imperative command to Alaric to deliver up the fugitive; a command which the barbarian felt it most prudent to obey. Syagrius was sent back a prisoner, and after awhile was secretly put to death by the terrible Frank. From Soissons Clovis fought his way to the Seine, and thence as far as the Loire. Idolater as he was. he had policy enough to make him respect the Christian institutions which he found in his way; and from his experience of the difficulty of repressing the rapacious habits of his followers, he generally contrived to avoid the large towns on his route, where the property of the Christian church was chiefly accumulated. In this way he refrained from entering the town of Rheims, at that time the residence of St. Remi. Some of the Frank soldiers, however, not so scrupulous, managed to pillage the church, and, among their booty, to carry off a vase of exquisite workmanship. The bishop sent a deputation of his clergy to Clovis, to request the restoration of this treasure. The chief received them with courtesy, invited them to follow him to Soissons, where the booty was collected, and compelled the thief to restore what he had taken.

An attack of the Thuringians, a German tribe to the eastward of the Weser, on the Frank possessions beyond the Rhine, next occupied the military talent of Clovis. As before with the Romans, he again drove everything before him, and made his name feared from the Weser to the Pyrennees.

It now became part of the policy of Clovis to ally himself by marriage with a princess of some Gallic family. He had already established a friendly understanding with the little court of Burgundy, as a mutual protection against their common enemy and neighbour, the formidable Alaric. The emissaries of Clovis to this court had returned to him, full of the praises of the princess Chrotildis, or Clotildis, a niece of Gondebaud, the reigning king. Her father Chilperic, her mother, and all of her brothers but one had been dispatched by Gondebaud, to clear his own way to the throne; he had hitherto spared the lives of his two nieces, thinking them too young to be dangerous to him. Clotildis lived at her uncle's seat; her sister Chrona was in a convent.

Although surrounded in her childhood by Arians, young Clotildis was trained in the Catholic faith; and as her character developed itself with her years, her unaffected piety added an indescribable charm to the gifts of mind and of person with which nature had endowed her. The terrible tragedy of her childhood had early taught her the vanity of rank, especially during a period of lawlessness, like the age in which she lived. The reputation of the handsome princess of Burgundy for sweetness, for innocence and for wit, made her an object of interest to neighbouring courts.

Clovis, hearing of her attractive qualities, sent another embassy to solicit the hand of the Princess Clotildis from her uncle. The guilty conscience of Gondebaud suggested to him the risk that might attend the marriage of his niece with the king of the Franks; what if her husband should also espouse her quarrel, and vindicate her father's wrongs and her own with his terrible sword? On the other hand, the guilty man felt the danger of irritating so redoubtable a warrior as Clovis, by a refusal, to be almost equal to the danger of acceding to his request. Gondebaud therefore temporised. He affected willingness to accept the Frank as a suitor for his niece, but raised a difficulty against the marriage of a Christian princess with an idolator. The representative of Clovis, who had by this time secured the consent of Clotildis herself, made light of this objection; and the king, reduced to his last shift, pretended to resent the acceptance which his niece had accorded to the proposal, without his concurrence. The young princess behaved with much spirit on the occasion; she longed for deliverance from the tyranny of her wicked uncle, and therefore bade the Frank ambassador urge his suit with all the energy possible, so as to anticipate the return of a courtier of her uncle's from Constantinople, who had been his accomplice in her father's murder, and who would certainly put a stop to her marriage. Gondebaud gave way at

last, through fear; and the marriage having been celebrated by proxy, the young princess set out from Chalons on the Saône, in a covered cart drawn by oxen. This slow mode of travelling did not suit the anxious haste of Clotildis to get safely out of her uncle's power. She prevailed on the ambassador of her husband, who attended her, to finish the journey on horseback, and leave the cart to follow by easy stages; if she could only feel herself fairly out of Burgundy, all would be well. Her deliverance was not effected a moment too soon. The wicked counsellor of Gondehaud had meanwhile returned from his mission to the East, and had persuaded the king to annul the marriage and recall his niece. Mounted soldiers followed on her track. and seized the empty cart; but by that time Clotildis was safe across the border of Burgundy, and soon reached Soissons, where Clovis welcomed her. An hour or two, earlier or later; a mile or two, faster or slower; -on so trifling a preponderance of the balance is Providence often pleased to make the most momentous consequences depend.

CHAPTER II.

Trials of the young queen.—Her infant children.—Battle of Tolbiac.—Vow of Clovis.—His baptism.

It was a bold venture, after all, which the young fugitive had made, to become the wife of a heathen; yet she had no doubt heard enough of his respectful deference for such men as St. Remi, to make her hope the best for the effect of her influence on him. Besides, she was not by any means a solitary Christian at her husband's court. All of his Gallic subjects, that is, the natives of the country which the Franks then occupied, were Christians, although the leaven of Arianism had to a certain extent impaired the integrity of the faith of many among them. The arrival of a Catholic queen at Soissons was an event of the brightest augury for them. They indulged in the fondest hopes that the honest heart of their heathen king would submit to the influence of Christianity, as he saw its spirit so engagingly represented in his incomparable queen. Their hopes were realised in the end; but neither at the time nor in the way that those good souls had anticipated.

Clotildis sustained her difficult part with excellent tact and prudence. She made good use of opportunities when they offered, for talking quietly to her husband about religion, without offensively obtruding it on his notice. The first evidence of her growing influence was the permission which he gave her to have their eldest child, Ingomer, baptised. Her trust in Providence must have been sorely tried, when God took her infant to himself within a week of his baptism, and when in addition to her own natural sorrow, she had to bear the reproaches of her husband as the occasion of her child's death, by subjecting it to what he considered a superstitious rite. The brokenhearted mother could only reply by declaring her thankfulness to God for having called a child of her's to his kingdom.

By the time that her second child, Clodomir, was born, Clotildis had regained sufficient influence to have him also carried to the baptismal font. Within a day or two after, he too sickened, like his brother, and Clovis, confirmed in his idea of baptism as a baneful act of magic, could only exclaim, in the bitterness of his disappointment, "Of course he must die, like his brother, since you have had him baptised." It was a moment of trial for our holy queen, hardly inferior in heaviness to that which demanded from Abraham the sacrifice of his only son. Not only the life of her child, but the chance, so to speak, of her husband's conversion was trembling in the balance. Yet she could do what alone remained for her to do. She asked from God the life of her infant as much for its father's sake as for its own, which indeed was not

small to her. Providence was satisfied with the ordeal of suspense endured by the queen; the moment of danger passed safely, and Clodomir lived to be a man.

The founder of a race of kings was not disposed, in the pride of his first success, to receive the grace of conversion. It was necessary that he should be taught the uncertain value of human glory, before he could humble himself to accept of a religious system which must for some time previously have recommended itself to his understanding. But the time for his conversion was advancing, and at last arrived, in the following manner.

The Allemanni, a warlike tribe of Germany, occupying the right, or eastern bank of the Upper Rhine, between the lake of Constance and Mayence, crossed the river (496), and attacked Cologne. The Franks in that part of the country lived under Sigebert, with whom Clovis at once made common cause, and gave the invaders battle at Tolbiac. The fortune of war seemed on the point of deserting the standard of Clovis; his army was hard pressed, and himself in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. When hopeless rout was impending on the Franks, Clovis cried out in his agony, invoking Jesus Christ, whom Clotildis said was the Son of the living God, and vowing that if he gained the day, he would worship this

Jesus, and be baptised in his name. It was a blind sort of venture, thus to stake truth or falsehood on the chance of a battle; yet his rude heart probably intended well: and after the tide of war had turned in his favour, he set about fulfilling his vow in earnest. Passing by Toul on his return home, he took along with him St. Vedast, a holy priest, to instruct him in the Christian religion. Queen Clotildis met him at Rheims with a grateful heart, and St. Remi was invited to admit the king to the rite of baptism. A difficulty yet remained. The Franks were devoted to their idols, and Clovis feared to shake their allegiance to himself if he offered any violence to the objects of their false worship. On the remonstrance of Remi, however, he called his army together, related to them the particulars of his vow on the day of danger before the enemy, and urged them to renounce their idols which had been unable to help them in emergency. They did not wait till he had finished speaking, but cried out, to a man, "We renounce them, and will adore the Incarnate God, whom Remi proclaims." It was then arranged that the ceremony of baptism should be performed on the eve of Christmas, in the church of St. Martin, outside the gates of the town (496).

When the auspicious day arrived, a long and beautiful procession wound through the streets of Rheims, singing hymns of joy, till it reached the church, which had been sumptuously decorated for the occasion. St. Remi led Clovis by the hand; Clotildis followed, with an overflowing heart, leading two sisters of her husband. No doubt she felt that the blessed spirit of her little Ingomer was not far off on that day; his bitter death had been the sowing-time of this harvest of recompense. The procession closed with three thousand Frank soldiers, the first-fruits of their nation to the gospel. On the way, Clovis turned to the bishop and asked him, "My father, is this the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which you have promised to me?"—"No, my prince," replied St. Remi, "it is only the way that leads to it."

When they had reached the font, the bishop addressed the royal convert, "Bow thy head, O proud Sygambrian, beneath the yoke of the Lord; worship what thou hast heretofore burnt, and burn what thou hast worshipped." He then baptised the king in the name of the Holy Trinity, and anointed him with chrism. Albofledis, one of the king's sisters, was also baptised; the other, who was already a Christian, but had adopted the Arian creed, was received back to Catholic communion. The brave men, who were companions of the king in the graces of that day, were baptised by the bishops and the clergy whom the great event had brought in numbers to Rheims. The whole of the following week was devoted to the completion of the king's instruction in religion. It is reported that while

Remi was reading to him the Passion of our Lord, the soldiers' nature broke forth in this exclamation, "If I had only been there with my Franks to avenge him!"

CHAPTER III.

Clovis the Eldest Son of the Church.—He kills Alaric.—Is made a Patrician of the Empire.—Commences a church over the tomb of St. Geneviève at Paris.—Provincial Council at Orleans.—Clovis dies.—His grandson murdered.—Story of young Clotildis.—The queen retires to Tours.—Her death.

The conversion of Clovis and of his companions gave sincere joy throughout the Christian world. The Pope wrote to congratulate him on the great event. The share which St. Remi had in it procured for him the title of the Apostle of the Franks, as St. Martin, a century earlier, was called the Apostle of the Gallic nation. In fact, at that period, Clovis was the only Catholic sovereign in existence. The emperor was a Eutychian; the kings of the Vandals in Africa, of the Visigoths in Spain and Aquitaine, of the Ostrogoths in Italy, and of the people of Burgundy, were all Arians. The conversion of the Franks happening about a century earlier than the arrival of St. Augustine among the Anglo-Saxons in England, the king of the French

nation used to call himself the Eldest son of the Church.

With the zeal of a neophyte, Clovis made strong and successful appeals to the body of the French nation to imitate his example, and abandon their idols. Before long, he had the pleasure of witnessing the conversion of nearly the whole of his people. Those of them who still remained unchanged, retired into Belgium, under a prince of the Franks who resided near Cambrai; and, indeed, part of the Belgian population remained pagan, till the time of St. Bernard.

Clovis also became an apt scholar of his holy wife, in works of Christian charity, in building and endowing churches, in relieving the poor, and in maintaining widows and orphans. When he had occasion to move his army in the neighbourhood of churches or monasteries, he was more than ever strict in enforcing their immunity from plunder.

It must be confessed, however, with the most impartial historians, that the love of dominion and of conquest was little changed in the Frank king by his conversion. Only, when acts of injustice were successfully achieved, of which the pagan would have thought no more, the Christian king set about making reparation for them, by munificent gifts to religion. He made the profession of Arianism, maintained by Alaric, an apology for attacking the kingdom of the Visigoths; in reality, however, burning with desire to

plunder it for his own benefit. He defeated and killed Alaric in a pitched battle near Poitiers, and seized his treasury at Toulouse; and but for the threatening attitude of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, the royal treasury at Carcassonne would have shared the same fate.

By way of compensation, Clovis made rich presents to the church of St. Hilary at Poitiers, and of St. Martin at Tours; and, on his return home, he fulfilled a vow which he had made before leaving it, to commence the erection of a church over the tomb of St. Geneviève at Paris, in honour of St. Peter and Paul; an edifice to which Clotildis put a finishing hand.

About the same time, the Roman emperor, Anastasius, paid the Frank king the high compliment of sending him the purple robe which distinguished a patrician, or a high nobleman of the empire. He assumed the badge of his new dignity at the tomb of St. Martin, outside the gate of Tours, and thence rode in state to the Cathedral, wearing a circlet of gold on his head, and scattering largesse to the people as he went along.

The close of his reign was dishonoured by the treacherous murder of several princes of his family in Austrasia, whom he desired to put out of the way, that the sovereignty might without fail descend to his own sons. His inordinate ambition satisfied, he had leisure to repent of what he had done, and to make

such reparation as he could for his crimes. The last year of his life, a numerous council of bishops assembled at Orleans, consisting of five metropolitans, or archbishops, and twenty-seven suffragans. The king co-operated with them in securing the stability of the rising French church. He died the same year (511), at Paris, and was interred in his new church, which afterwards became celebrated, under the name of the virgin St. Geneviève.

Three sons of Clovis and of St. Clotildis survived their father, together with a fourth son of Clovis, born before his marriage with Clotildis. They divided the kingdom among them; the towns of Metz, Soissons, Paris and Orleans being their respective capitals. For some years they lived in peace. The queen dowager spent a great part of her time at Tours, devoted to good works and the daily worship of God, in the church of St. Martin.

By and by, however, the French kings were again involved in war with their neighbours. Clodomir, the eldest, fell in an engagement with the king of Burgundy, leaving three young sons, whose rights to their father's share of the kingdom obtained no respect from their uncles. The unhappy children were educated by their grandmother, Clotildis, who also removed to Paris, that she might more readily promote their interests, and prevail on their uncles to do them justice.

The saint's surviving sons, jealous of the interest that she took in the young princes, and fearing that her influence might oblige restitution of their patrimony, obtained possession of their persons by stratagem, and put two of them to death; the third, Clodoald or Cloud, escaping, afterwards entered into holy orders, and lived and died in a pious manner, in the neighbourhood of Paris, where, in later times, a church and a royal residence received his name of St. Cloud, in deference to the local estimation which he enjoyed as a saint. The disconsolate queen recovered the bodies of her grandchildren, and gave them a royal funeral in the new church of St. Geneviève at Paris.

Our Saint was destined to suffer another and still more cruel family affliction, in the person of her only daughter, Clotildis, who was married to Amalaric, king of the Visigoths. The young princess was a sincere Catholic, while her husband had the misfortune to be an Arian. This marriage of policy turned out a very miserable one. Amalaric insisted on his wife conforming to his religion; she refused, and had to submit, in consequence, to the most savage treatment from the king, and even to the lowest indignities from her people, as she went to public worship in her own church. She at length appealed to her brother Childebert, king of Paris, and as a token, sent him a hand-kerchief dyed with her blood. The prince did not

hesitate a moment. He entered Narbonne, the Visigoth capital, with an armed force, seized the treasury, and killed Amalaric as he tried to escape.

This act of summary justice accomplished, he set out in triumph for Paris, taking his unhappy sister along with him; but she expired on the road, of the severe injuries she had received.

Thus, on the whole, the life of our Saint, in that lawless time, had been a painful one. The massacre of her own family, when she was a child; the death of her husband, the murder of her grandsons, and now the premature death of her only daughter, had nearly filled her cup of bitterness to the brim. But from this point, the closing years of her pilgrimage on earth were passed in comparative repose. She spent much of her time at Tours, in penitential observances and in continual prayer. Such property as she possessed was divided among the poor, and the followers of voluntary poverty in the religious orders. She built several houses for these in various parts of France, more particularly at Rheims, at Tours, and at Rouen.

Old age found her engaged in these works of charity and of piety. During one of her visits to Tours, she received an intimation from a heavenly messenger that the day of her summons hence was very near. In the exuberant joy of her heart, she cried out, "Unto thee, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul; come and deliver me; O Lord I have trusted in thee." An attack of

illness confined her to bed, but alms and prayer continued to be her constant employment. She sent for her two sons from Paris and from Soissons, to come and see her die. They came at her bidding, and she foretold to them many events which were about to happen. On the thirtieth day after the summons of the angel, she was anointed, and then received the sacred viaticum, according to the usual order at that time, and for many ages subsequently. Then declaring her belief in the Most Holy Trinity, she passed away from the scene of her many trials to everlasting rest, the 3rd of June, 545. Her departure took place in the night; yet we are told that her chamber shone as if it had been noonday; and that the brightness lasted till daybreak. Her sons conveyed the body of the queen to Paris, and laid it beside her husband, in the church of St. Geneviève; from which they were afterwards removed to the royal mausoleum at St. Denvs.

THE

Pife of Saint Badegund,

QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

"And Grief, too, held her vigil there;
With unrelenting sway
Breaking my airy visions down,
Theowing my flowers away:—
I owe to her fond care alone
That I may now be all Thine own."

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THE LIFE OF

ST. RADEGUND, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

Radegund, a princess of Thuringia.—Becomes the captive of Clotaire I., king of the Franks,—afterwards his queen.—
They separate.—Her convent at Poitiers.—Hymn Vexilla.—
Her illness and death.—Story of St. Junian.—Charles VII. of France.

Thuringia, the native country of St. Radegund, embraced the territory beyond the Rhine, lying between the Weser and the Oder. At the death of king Basinus, it was divided among his three sons. manfried, the most powerful and the most ambitious of the three, coveted the possessions of his brothers. Goaded on by the taunts of his unscrupulous queen, a niece of the Gothic sovereign, Theodoric, he assassinated his brother Berthaire, and only waited for a good opportunity of putting Balderic, the survivor, out of the way. At that time, Thierry, the eldest son of Clovis, king of the Franks, reigned at Metz, over the territory now comprehended in Lorraine, Champagne, Belgium, and the Rhenish provinces of Prussia. manfried entered into an alliance with Thierry, for the infamous purpose of wresting the remaining portion of Thuringia from his brother, Balderic, by the sword. Their wicked project succeeded; but, as often happens among unprincipled men, when associated for an evil object, Hermanfried overreached his ally in the bargain they had struck, about the territory which Thierry was to acquire as the price of his co-operation. The Frank king dissembled his indignation, and his purpose of revenge, until the death of Theodoric, the king of the Goths, with whom he wished to avoid a collision (526). Thierry then called his brother, Clotaire I., from Soissons to his aid; they entered Thuringia together, and inflicted a cruel chastisement on the perfidious Hermanfried; devastating the country with fire and sword, and carrying off much valuable booty and many prisoners of war.

Clotaire obtained, as part of his share in the adventure, a young prince and princess, the orphan children of Berthaire. Radegund and her little brother, after seeing their home made desolate by their wicked uncle, were now torn from their native country, and carried to Soissons, as captives and slaves of the Frank king, Clotaire (531).

Though tall of her age, Radegund was still a child. The horrors she had already passed through had stamped on her beautiful face an expression of wild and of bitter sorrow, rarely seen in one so young. Clotaire admired her childish beauty, and with the desire of educating her for his future queen, sent her

to reside at Athie, in Picardy, his country seat on the Somme. In this retired and genial spot, the little princess soon made rapid progress in her studies, under competent instructors, and by degrees became more reconciled to the sad vicissitudes of her life; the light of the gospel, too, began slowly to dispel the heathen darkness of her childhood. The day of her baptism was to her the beginning of a new and a nobler life, in which the imitation of Jesus Christ seems to have always formed the guiding principle of her conduct.

Time glided insensibly away, and young Radegund reached her nineteenth year (538). A message from Clotaire then summoned her to Vitry, in Belgium, to become his queen. The licentious man was not worthy of her. His private life was defaced by the worst vices of his yet half-savage race. But his will was absolute law for his dependents; and in spite of her aversion, the young Thuringian princess was compelled to assume the rank of queen-consort to this wicked man. She was already no novice in the practice of submission to the roughest discipline; but all her past training was necessary to support her in the life of trial now before her. The love of prayer, of austerities, and of the poor, which she had learnt at Athie, stood her in good stead now. Yet, with all her endeavours, she failed to secure the love of her lawless husband, who used to declare that she turned his court into a cloister.

His courtiers encouraged these unjust reproaches of the king; violent scenes ensued, from which the patience of the unhappy queen afforded her no protection; her only friend in that courtly circle, her brother, fell a victim to the cruelty of Clotaire; and his death filled up the measure of our saint's heavy trials.

Radegund had now passed six years of anxious struggle. Worn out with the contest, she solicited permission to retire from court, and assume the habit of a nun.* Clotaire was only too glad to get rid of her on such easy terms. It was arranged that she should commence her new life at Noyon, under the sanction of St. Medard, the bishop. She afterwards retired in her religious character to Saix, one of the royal residences in Poitou, where she at once adopted a severely penitential course of life. In no long time, however, the danger which naturally impends over such an arrangement as she had recently made, actually happened: Clotaire repented the dismissal of his beautiful queen, and news reached her that he was on his

^{*} The mutual abandonment of conjugal duties and rights, although sometimes permitted, cannot be said to be encouraged by the Church. Since the age of our Saint, new safeguards have been interposed. Not only must the consent of both parties be given, as, indeed, was necessary then, but both parties must now embrace the religious life, with the option to the husband of entering into holy orders.

way to Saix to reclaim her. She escaped with her companions to Poitiers, and, from the church of St. Hilary, wrote a letter to the king, imploring him to regard her for the future as dead to him. She prevailed, and soon after laid the foundation of a convent at Poitiers. A second time the king altered his mind, and insisted on Radegund's returning to his court. It required all the influence of Germanus, bishop of Paris, supported by threats of the vengeance of St. Martin, whom the Franks had learnt from the Gauls to revere, to make the king change his purpose. He ultimately died in possession of the entire kingdom of his father, and not before he had an opportunity of making such amends as were possible for his licentious life (561).

The Council of Tours, (566) formally placed the young convent of St. Radegund under its protection. By and by it assumed the name of St. Croix, in honour of a relic of the Holy Cross, which the emperor Justin sent to the convent at the request of the queen. Her friend, Venantius Fortunatus, afterwards bishop of Poitiers, composed on the occasion the hymn Vexilla regis prodeunt, nearly in the form in which it is still found in the Breviary, on Passion Sunday.

The latest incident in our Saint's active life was a journey to Arles, undertaken for the purpose of more complete initiation into the Rule which she had adopted for her nuns. At the feet of the illustrious abbess Cæsaria, Radegund acquired the necessary in-

struction; and returned to Poitiers, to put the finishing touches to the work of her life.

As our Saint approached its termination, and saw her task on earth accomplished in the permanent establishment of her nuns, she often begged our Lord to call her to Himself. One day, while she was praying in her oratory more fervently than usual, a youth of glorious appearance stood before her, and, shewing her his pierced hands and feet, from which issued rays of light more dazzling than the sun's, thus addressed her:-"O soul which I have redeemed, what is it that you ask of me? Why so many tears, and sighs, and prayers? See! I am always by your side, and very soon you shall know what the joys of heaven are, for you are a pearl of great price, and one of the most precious jewels in My crown."-" But why, O my Lord," rejoined the weeping saint, "do you bestow such a favour as this on me who am so unworthy?"-"Do not speak so, my child," answered her Lord; "I grant My favours to whom I will, and to whom I know it to be best to do so. To doubt this, would be to offend against faith and hope."

All through the first half of the year 587, St. Radegund lost strength daily, and her nuns plainly perceived that they must soon lose their beloved mother. Yet, to the last, she continued her practices of severe penance, she discharged, as usual, the most menial duties in the house, and she deprived her poor body of

food and of sleep. On the 12th of August, nature gave way, and the dying saint was unable to rise from the couch of sackcloth and ashes on which she usually snatched a little repose. Her nuns gathered about her, to pay her the last offices of love, and to learn how a saint could die. She bade them be comforted for her departure, and promised that in heart and in thought she would still remain with them. She received with overflowing devotion the last sacraments of the dying; and after the rite, she lay in profound meditation till the evening; when all at once she began to discourse .to her spiritual children with singular fluency and abundance, in words of the tenderest piety, chiefly supplied by her memory from her daily reading in the Gospels, in the Psalms of David, and in the writings of the holy fathers.

At night the saint relapsed into silence; but her eyes, and every portion of her countenance was eloquent with joy, and a sense of victory achieved. Heaven was so near her, and so attractive, that she had not one look of regret to spare for what she was leaving behind. As morning dawned she spoke once more: "I feel no more pain.—May God bless you all.—May Mary, our mother and our advocate, protect you.—Imitate her humility and her obedience.—Despise wealth, and value poverty above everything that is precious in the world.—I am leaving my exile for my home; my labour for eternal rest in God.—See! the angels are coming

to attend me to the marriage-feast of the immaculate Lamb.—The Spouse calls me away.—Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis." With these concluding words she gently bowed her head, and all was over. So radiant was the sunset of her cloudy and dark day.*

A singular incident is related in connexion with St. Radegund's death. A pious hermit of the name of Junian, between whom and St. Radegund there subsisted a holy friendship, had arranged with her, many years before, that whichever of them survived should receive the very earliest intelligence of the death of the other, that the survivor might pray for the departed. The moment that our saint expired, a messenger was despatched with the news to a place called Chaunay, a favourite resort of St. Junian. Exactly half way between Chaunay and St. Croix, the messenger from St. Croix met a messenger from Chaunay, on his way to communicate to St. Radegund the news of St. Junian's death. A priory, called La Troussaie, was afterwards erected on the spot where the messengers met.

The bishop of Poitiers was absent on a journey when the abbess of St. Croix expired. St. Gregory was therefore invited from Tours by her nuns to come and assist

^{*} Within these few years a pious lady, reduced by illness to the last extremity of weakness, suddenly raised herself in her dying bed, and stretching out her arms, with a beaming countenance exclaimed, "I see the sceptre of His love! Take me to Him! take me to Him!" and, sinking back, expired.

them in laying her in the tomb. He has left in writing an affecting narrative of the whole ceremony, in which the natural grief of all who were present was strangely mingled with supernatural attestations of the beatitude of the departed soul. Crowds came to visit her tomb, out of devotion to her memory, and to supplicate for temporal and spiritual blessings; and none of her clients seem to have left the place with a wish unfulfilled. To the saint's intercession, the recovery of Anjou and Maine, of Normandy and of Guienne from the English, in the middle of the 15th century, used to be ascribed by Charles VII of France, quite as much as to the imbecility of the English government.

St. Radegund is now venerated at Poitiers as the patroness of the town. Her biography has been written by the illustrious Fortunatus, her contemporary and friend; by Baudonivia, one of her nuns; and by Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, from the archives of her convent. St. Gregory of Tours, who highly esteemed her, from personal knowledge, has inserted her panegyric in several of his works.

The tomb of the saint was violated, and her bones burnt by the French Calvinists (1562), but her convent, after sustaining various losses in the great revolution, still survives.

A convent bearing her name once stood on the site of Jesus College, Cambridge; a row of houses in the neighbourhood is still called Radegund Buildings.

DESCENT OF FRANK KINGS FROM CLOVIS I.

Clovis I. died 511.—St. Clotildis.

Clotaire I. died 561.—St. Radegund.

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Dagobert I. died 638.

Clovis II.—St. Bathildis.

THE

Vife of Saint Bathildis,

QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

"SHAPED HER HEART WITH WOMAN'S MEEKNESS
TO ALL DUTIES OF HER RANK:
AND A GENTLE CONSORT MADE HE,
AND HER GENTLE MIND WAS SUCH
THAT SHE GREW A NOBLE LADY,
AND THE PEOPLE LOVED HER MUCH."

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THE LIFE OF

ST. BATHILDIS,

QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

CHAPTER I.

Two provinces of the Franks.—Reign of Dagobert I.—The office of Mayor of the Palace.—Bathildis, an English slave—is married to Clovis II.—He dies.

We are not concerned to follow the fortunes of the Merovingian race of kings, step by step, as it reached its highest point of glory, and thence began to decline. But as the commencement of its history is associated with a holy queen, so the beginning of its decline also introduces the reader to another saint, Bathildis, the wife of Clovis II. In order fully to understand the particulars of her life, it will be necessary to observe a few of the more striking changes which had been brought about in the conditions of the Franks, as a nation, during the century immediately succeeding the death of St. Clotildis.

The four little provinces, (for in the modern sense it would be almost absurd to call them kingdoms,) of which the respective centres were Orleans, Paris, Soissons, and Metz, were fused into two, under the names of Austrasia and Neustria. Austrasia, or German-France, embraced the north-eastern part of ancient Gaul, of which the Franks had first made themselves masters, together with all the district of country stretching eastward to the confines of Germany and the Rhine. Its population was a shifting one; as new hordes of barbarians arrived from Germany, Frisians, Westphalians, and Saxons, they were not easily fused into the great Frank family, and thus the civilization of Austrasia was much retarded.

Neustria, or Roman-France, on the other hand, extended from the borders of the north-eastern province to the Atlantic Ocean, and towards the south, as far as the river Loire. It was the policy of Clovis, and of his successors, to make the most of this portion of their French possessions, as their ultimate design was the occupation of the whole territory of ancient Gaul. Through the failure of other branches of the race, it happened more than once in its history that the king of one of these provinces became king also of the other. Thus Clovis II. and his son, Dagobert I., the friends and patrons of St. Eloy, the goldsmith, held both provinces, and Burgundy into the bargain.

In Dagobert I. the Merovingian race of kings is

regarded as having reached its highest eminence. He was a good friend to religion, although, it must be confessed, his private life was, for a time at least, not strictly in accordance with his profession. He also laid the foundation of a system of laws for his people. From the period of his death (638,) the decline of his race is usually believed to have begun. The rapid decay of this line of kings has not escaped the remark of an eminent historian, who observes, that of the four sons of Clovis I., and again of Clotaire I., only one left issue. Most of the other kings died young men in years. They were a peculiar race. A king of the Franks was a father at fifteen, and an old man at thirty. Their sudden change from barbarism to the luxuries of comparative civilisation brought in its train habits of indulgence which proved fatal to strength and life, and at last extinguished the line altogether, in the feebleness of an effete race.

Another element in the history of the Frank kings demands notice, both as explaining another cause of their decline, and as intimately connected with the story of Bathildis. We mean the office of the Mayor of the palace, or major-domo; a kind of lord chamberlain; at first introduced by the kings, as an instrument for controlling the wealthy proprietors of land, from whom the mayor of the palace was always taken. In process of time, however, this officer found it more for his advantage to make common cause with the proprietors,

and to control the king; thus he became at length the nominee, not of the king, but of the proprietors, who elected their favorite. In this way the family of Pepin, mayor of the palace in Austrasia, rose to power, and finally superseded in name, as it had long done in fact, the royal line of Clovis.

On the death of Dagobert I., Austrasia fell to the share of his son Sigebert II., while Neustria and Burgundy were allotted to his other son, Clovis II., then a minor; in whose name the regency was held by his mother, Nantechilde, and by d'Eghe, mayor of the palace. The chief ornament of his court were St. Eloy and his friend St. Ouen, both of them were soon afterward promoted to the mitre, at Noyon and at Rouen.

D'Eghe dying, his office at the Court of Neustria was supplied by Erchinoald; and at this point in the history of the Franks our story begins.

In one of the frequent forays, (for they merit no more dignified name,) that took place between the Franks and the inhabitants of that part of Great Britain lying next France, a young English girl was taken prisoner, carried into France, and sold as a domestic slave to Erchinoald, mayor of the palace, under Clovis II. Her name was Baltechildis, shortened into Balthildis, or Bathildis. Her sweetness and goodness under misfortune, quite as much as the cheerfulness of her beautiful countenance, and the elegance of her figure, recommended her to her master, who appointed her to

the lighter duties of waiting, as the cupbearer, at his table. She was as popular among her fellow-slaves, as she was with her master and his friends. There was no office of kindness too menial for her to perform, for the very least among them. The charm of her manners we are told, was farther heightened by a delicate reserve, which forbade familiarity, without diminishing their gracefulness.

----- "Within her face, Humility and dignity Were met in a most sweet embrace."

Her master was fascinated by his beautiful slave; and at the death of his wife, Lanthilde, he offered his hand in marriage to Bathildis. It was found impossible, however, to overcome her reluctance. Young Clovis, equally attracted by the lovely English girl, was more fortunate; Bathildis accepted him, and became his queen. She carried with her into her new life of honour the same goodness that had won all hearts to her in her former lowliness. She studied her husband's wishes in everything; the poor found her a liberal friend; to the clergy she showed the deference of an affectionate daughter. She, too, like all of her blessed order, was much devoted to prayer, frequently mingling her tears with her supplications. Clovis seeing her piety, gave her a valuable assistant and guide, in his friend, abbot Genesius, through whom she dispensed her bounty to the destitute, and to convents and churches. The good abbot rose to be bishop of Lyons in the course of time.

Her union with the king was blessed with three sons. The crown of Austrasia becoming vacant (656,) by the death of Sigebert, and the failure of his issue, Clovis succeeded to the possession of the entire kingdom of the Franks. He did not long survive this accumulation of honours, dying in November of the same year, after a reign of eighteen years, yet still a young man.

CHAPTER II.

Bathild's is Regent.—Her humane acts.—Her convents.—She resigns—and retires.—Chelles.—Dies.—Reflections.

As was usual on the death of a Frank king, one of the sons of Clovis succeeded to the crown of Neustria and of Burgundy, with the title of Clotaire III.; his brother Childeric I. became king of Austrasia; while Thierry, the youngest of the late king's sons, had to wait for fifteen years, till the death of his brother Clotaire opened up for him the succession to Neustria and Burgundy.

The Regency of her son Clotaire's share of the kingdom was held by his mother, Bathildis, assisted by Erchinoald, the mayor of the palace, her old master. For a time all went well. The queen studied the advantage of her people in every possible way. She extinguished a poll-tax, which had been so rigorously levied as to tempt poor fathers of families to destroy their children rather than incur the penalty incident to rearing a numerous family of contributors to the odious tax. Like St. Margaret of Scotland, also, Bathildis took much to heart the abuses which had crept into religion, and she engaged the bishops to extirpate the plague of simony, which threatened to eat into the heart of the Frank church. The queen was a munificent friend to the religious houses of her kingdom. In particular, she founded two, out of her own private property; one of them at Corby, near Amiens; and the other at Chelles, near Paris, on the river Marne.

When St. Eloy gave up his holy soul to God (659), at Noyon, the queen went to see his remains, and spared no pains to secure them, as relics of a saint, for her convent at Chelles. The inhabitants of the town were equally desirous to keep them to themselves, and the queen eventually waived her claim.

To the redemption of slaves taken in war, queen Bathildis especially devoted herself, with the liberality of one who had herself known the sorrows of a captive in an enemy's land. While prisoners of war were every day sold for the benefit of their captors, the queen was a constant purchaser, more particularly when her unhappy countrymen and countrywomen were offered

for sale. Her edicts against the barbarous practice do not seem to have been much attended to.

But troubles now began to gather round our queen. Erchinoald was no longer mayor of the palace; and the ambitious and impracticable policy of his successor, Ebroin, involved the government in serious disputes with the nobles and the clergy of Neustria. The new mayor was unscrupulous as he was daring. If a bishop presumed to question his designs, the mitre was no protection against the vengeance of Ebroin. Annemond, bishop of Lyons, perished in this way; and to aggravate the crime, the mayor pretended that he had the authority of the queen for what he had done. This was not the only instance in which he attempted to compromise his royal mistress, who, feeling herself no match for her chamberlain, could only resign the regency, and retire altogether from public life (665). She bade adieu to her counsellors, forgiving those who had injured her, and asking the forgiveness of all for herself in return; and sought a home among her nuns at Chelles. Here her habitual humility again found full scope: she submitted to the abbess, as to a mother; and the sisters she regarded as her equals, or even as her superiors; for there was no duty in the house low enough or menial enough to satisfy her. She served them at their meals, and she served them in the scullery; but her favourite post of service was the infirmary. She had learnt her noviciate of charity

while she was the slave of Divine Providence; now she perfected herself in it as the slave of the love of Jesus. Her habit of prayer, her gift of tears, followed her to Chelles, and were the crown of her holy life, as they had been its chief support.

The last fifteen years of her life were passed in this peaceful retirement. At length the end began to draw near. Her health declined, and she suffered acute pain. Yet so complete was the training of this holy woman in the school of suffering, that she made her very infirmities a subject of thanksgiving to her Lord. Shortly before her departure to eternal life, she had a vision similar to the dream of the patriarch Jacob. She beheld a ladder erected before the altar of the Blessed Virgin; its summit was lost in heaven, and the angels of God were waiting to accompany herself in her ascent to paradise. She gathered from it an intimation that the hour of her deliverance was at hand. She seems to have confided her vision to a few persons only, and to have begged that it might be kept secret from the good abbess and her nuns, knowing the grief that such an intimation would occasion them; neither was her humility willing to make a boast of the assurance of her heavenly reward, with which she had been favoured. She applied herself more assiduously than ever to prayer, waiting from day to day, with great humility and contrition of heart, the pleasure of her gracious Lord. A young godchild of hers,

aged six years, was invited by the saint to accompany her to heaven, and took leave of the world a short time before herself. Finally, the saint, resigning her soul into the protection of Jesus, with her eyes and her hands raised to heaven, departed in great peace, January 30th, 680. A supernatural light is said to have pervaded her chamber at the moment of her passage. Few persons were aware of it, so well had her secret been kept. The grief of her nuns was great in proportion to its suddenness, on hearing that their treasure, for so they regarded her, had been taken from them. Commending her precious soul with many tears to their heavenly master, they buried their beloved friend with great reverence and honour.

Her contemporary biographer sums up her character in few words, as a striking example of the union of humility with wisdom, of meekness, and amiability, and even excessive compassion, with the most vigilant prudence, and delicacy the most pure. All her actions were the fruit, not of impulse, but of well-concerted method.

A succession of miraculous cures at her tomb attested the stamp of approbation which Almighty God had put on her life and her holy death. Her remains were long preserved as relics at Chelles, and a part of them at Corby. A hundred and fifty years after her death, they were translated into a more distinguished shrine.

Distance of time makes events, which in their day

seemed long separated, appear as if they were almost coincident. Distance of place has a similar effect on objects of vision. Two stars, millions, perhaps billions of miles apart, shall seem as if they shone together as one, if you only recede far enough away from them. We read, on one page, of our saint's trials as a slave; on the next, of her trials as a queen. A page or two further on, we come to the end of all her trials, and the commencement of her reward. Doubtless, as she regards all these events now, from her seat of bliss in heaven, they must appear as transient, as virtually coincident as they do to us in reading of them, twelve centuries after their occurrence. But they were by no means so closely united, while they were actually and slowly passing. Each day of slavery, of separation from her native land, seemed as long to her, then, as any day of suffering still seems to us now. Faith and hope alone can thus bring the beginning and the end together, and so blend the endurance of the conflict with the enjoyment of the crown, as to make the heaviest trials appear light, and the longest, "but for a moment," even while they are actually weighing on the human spirit. This is an important lesson, resulting especially from the study of the lives of saints who were, more remarkably than others, "made perfect through suffering."

DESCENT OF THE FRANK KINGS FROM CLOVIS I.

Clovis I. died 511.—St. Clotildis.

Clotaire I. died 561.

Chilperic I. died 584.

Clotaire II. died 628.

Dagobert 1. died 638.

Clovis II.—St. Bathildis.

The Lives of SS. Clotildis and Bathildis may be found at length in Mabillon, Acta SS. Ord. Ben., Volumes I. and II. There the common error is corrected, which assigns the 26th January as the day of St. Bathildis' death, and, afterwards, of her festival.

The author has also taken as his guide, in sketching the rise and progress of the Franks, Henrion's Histoire de France, tome I.



THE LIFE

OF

St. Elizabeth of Yungary.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

THE LIVES OF SŒUR ROSALIE, MADLLE. DE LAMOUROUS, ETC. ETC.

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THE LIFE OF ST. ELIZABETH.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and early childhood of Elizabeth.—She is betrothed to the young Duke Louis of Thuringia, and sent to be educated at his father's court.—Her early trials there.—Her marriage.

THERE are few names in the calendar of the saints so full of tender and poetical associations as her's who has come down to us through six long centuries, as the "dear Saint Elizabeth."

Her history has the brilliancy of a romance of chivalry with the deep pathos of a tale of human affection, added to the more sacred interest which belongs to the biography of a saint.

In her short life of four-and-twenty years, she passed through all the trials of wife, mother, and widow: she had her brief taste of more than common happiness, and then a bitter draught of sorrow, such as is given to none but those highly favoured souls, who drink of our Lord's own chalice, and are baptized in His own baptism of blood.

Her image stands out before us in the pages of her

chivalrous biographer* like one of the beautiful frescoes often discovered under the whitewash of an old gothic church—"a spirit, yet a woman too," with the expression of a bright and playful child on the features of some youthful martyr smiling at the rack.

Her tortures were of the soul and spirit. The slow wringing of all earthly affections out of a heart which cherished them only next to God, the early death of her princely husband, the ingratitude of her poor, the persecution of her kindred, the separation from her early friends and her beloved children, the mysterious harshness of her director, and the utter loneliness and isolation of the last few years of a life which had been so full of love, made that short life as full of sorrow as its days were few. And yet the prevailing feature in the character of this lovely saint is an infantine joyousness in the midst of anguish and bereavement, well befitting the cherished daughter of St. Francis.

She sheds a gleam over the stern times in which she lived like the little golden flower† which bears her name, and looks brightly up to heaven from its home on the wild heath or mountain side, fit emblem of "the dear St. Elizabeth;" or like the star which presided over her birth, and which her father's minstrelastrologer announced to the nobles of Thuringia.

^{*} The Comte de Montalembert.

[†] The cystus helianthemum is called by the peasants of Germany Elisabethan Blumchen—Elizabeth's flower.

The Maitre Klingsohr had come all the way from Hungary to settle a dispute among the noble minstrels of the Landgrave's Court. They asked him to tell them something new, and he replied: "I will tell you something new, and joyful withal. I see a fair star which ariseth in Hungary, and shineth from thence to Marburg, and from Marburg over the whole earth. Know, that this very night, there is born to my Lord the king of Hungary a daughter, who shall be called Elizabeth; she shall be given in marriage to the son of the prince of this land; she shall be a saint, and her sanctity shall be the joy and consolation of Christendom."

In accordance with this prediction on the day and hour named by Klingsohr at Eisenach, the queen of Hungary gave birth to a daughter, who was baptized by the name of Elizabeth.

Andrew the second, king of Hungary, the father of Elizabeth, was noted alike for his successful wars against the pagans, his earnest piety and his generosity towards the church and the poor. Some of the vast gold mines, which at this day form the wealth of Hungary, were discovered in his reign, and their produce enabled him to multiply his alms in building churches, endowing convents, and increasing his already abundant liberality to the poor.

His queen Gertrude, the descendant of Charlemagne and sister of St. Hedwige, equalled him in piety and goodness. The most tender affection united these two holy souls, and they watched with joy the early promise of sanctity which marked the infancy of their lovely child. The first words which passed her lips were the names of Jesus and Mary, and even at the age of three years the germ of that tender compassion for the poor, for which she was hereafter to be distinguished, shewed itself in looks of pity for their distress, which she strove to alleviate by gifts. Thus was her first deed an alms, her first word a prayer.

The Hungarians were already rejoicing in this blessed child, when a noble embassy arrived from Herman Landgrave of Hesse and Thuringia, and Count Palatine of Saxony, to ask her hand in marriage for his son Louis.

The request was granted, for the Landgrave's fame as a noble Christian knight and sovereign had reached the ears of the king and queen of Hungary, and they feared not to entrust their precious child to his keeping. So the little princess, now four years old, was laid in a massive silver cradle, and as the king gave her into the hands of the Lord of Varila, the Landgrave's ambassador, he said, "I entrust my chief earthly comfort to your knightly honour," to which the good knight replied: "I receive her right willingly into my keeping, and will ever be faithful to her." He kept his word, as we shall see.

The long journey into Thuringia was safely made,

the Landgrave pressed his little daughter to his heart, and thanked God for having given her to him. She was solemnly betrothed to the young duke Louis, who was now eleven years old, and from that day forward the two children were brought up together, and called each other by the sweet names of brother and sister, a touching practice, which in their wedded life they never laid aside.

The early piety of the little Elizabeth seems to have been deepened by a sorrow which befel her soon after her arrival in Thuringia. Her mother, whom she tenderly loved, was cruelly murdered by traitors, who aimed at the life of the king. The Landgrave chose out seven of the noblest maidens of his court of about her own age, to be brought up with the princess of Hungary. One of these ladies, named Guta, remained with her nearly to the end of her life, and was one of the principal witnesses at the process of her canonization. From her deposition are derived the following details of St. Elizabeth's childhood. She would go, says her loving companion, into the castle chapel as often as she could, and place herself at the altar step with a great psalter open before her, though she did not yet know how to read, then she would fold her little hands together, and raising her eyes to heaven, become absorbed in prayer.

When at play with her companions, she would hop on one foot towards the chapel, whither the others were obliged to follow her, and if she found it closed she would kiss the lock, the door, the very walls for love of the hidden God who dwelt there. If she had missed an opportunity of making some of her accustomed prayers or genuflections, she would say to her little companions, "come let us lie down on the floor and measure which of us is the tallest." And then she would stretch herself beside each of the little girls in turn, and take this opportunity to humble herself before God and recite a hail Mary.

After she had become a wife and a mother, she loved to tell of these innocent little artifices of her childhood.

Her young companions looked up to her with a loving awe, and declared that the child Jesus used often to come to play with her and salute her tenderly.

The boundless charity, which was afterwards her characteristic, shewed itself very early in her life: she distributed all the money which was given to her among the poor, and wandered about the kitchens and offices of the castle collecting scraps for them, greatly to the displeasure of the servants.

She practised great reserve in her words, and on festivals always laid aside some portion of her rich attire in order to honour her Lord by this trifling humiliation. She daily sought to break her will in little things, and thus prepared herself for the great sacrifices which she was hereafter to offer Him. She loved dancing, which was the favourite amusement of

the countries, both of her birth and of her adoption, but would stop at the end of one turn, saying: "One turn is enough for the world; I will give up the rest for the love of Jesus Christ."

Elizabeth had scarcely attained her ninth year when a new grief befel her in the death of the Landgrave Herman, the brave and pious father of her betrothed. In his lifetime no one had dared to molest the child he so dearly loved; but now, although the young Louis was sovereign of Thuringia, he was in a great measure under the direction of his mother, the Landgravine Sophia, who regarded what she accounted Elizabeth's excessive devotion with great disapprobation. The beautiful princess Agnes, who was brought up with her future sister-in-law, but who had acquired none of her spirit of detachment from the world and its vanities, bitterly reproached her with leading a life so unbefitting her rank, and told her in plain terms that she was fitter for a housemaid than for her brother's wife. The young ladies of the court soon adopted the tone of the two princesses, and even knights and gentlemen behaved to the friendless child with very unchivalrous discourtesy. It was agreed on all hands that she had nothing of the princess about her.

On her side Elizabeth shrank more and more from the society of the noble maidens around her, and sought her companions among the poor; but no tinge of bitterness or even impatience shewed itself in her gentle spirit. The injustice of men had no other effect than to throw her more entirely upon God. "Like the lily among thorns," says one of her historians, "she budded and bloomed amid troubles, and shed around her the sweet and fragrant perfume of patience and humility."

It was about this time that an incident occurred, which has been related by all her historians. On the feast of the assumption the Landgravine Sophia said to Agnes and Elizabeth, "Let us go to Eisenach to the church of our Lady, to hear the grand mass of the Teutonic Knights, by whom she is so specially honoured. Perhaps we shall hear a sermon in her praise, Put on your richest robes and your crowns of gold." The two young princesses, having arrayed themselves as they were commanded, went down into the city, and on their entrance into the church, knelt upon faldstools prepared for them before a large crucifix. At the sight of the image of her dying Saviour, Elizabeth took off her crown, and placing it upon her seat, prostrated herself upon the ground with no other ornament upon her head but her flowing hair. When the Landgravine saw her, she said sharply, "what is this for, my lady Elizabeth? what new fancy is this? do you want to make every body laugh at us? Young ladies ought to hold themselves upright, and not throw themselves upon the ground like mad women or old nuns, who bow themselves down like

broken reeds. Can you not do as we do, instead of behaving like an ill brought up child? Is your crown too heavy, that you lie there all bent together like a peasant girl?" Elizabeth rose and replied humbly: "dear lady, be not angry. See there before my eyes my God and king, that sweet and merciful Jesus, who is crowned with sharp thorns, and shall I, vile creature that I am, come before Him crowned with gold, and pearls, and jewels? my crown would be a mockery of His." Then she began to weep bitterly, for the love of Jesus had already wounded her tender heart, and continued praying so fervently that a fold of her mantle, with which she had covered her eyes, was all wet with her tears. The two other princesses were obliged for shame to follow her example, and to cover their faces also, "which," adds the old chronicler, "they would have been as well pleased not to have done."

As Elizabeth grew older, the persecution against her became more and more envenomed; the chief vassals and grave counsellors of the Landgrave joined in the outcry of the courtiers and ladies, and openly declared that she ought to be sent back to her father, for that a Beguine like her was not fit to be the wife of their prince. The Landgravine Sophia did all she could to get her shut up in a convent. Agnes repeated to her continually: "My lady Elizabeth, if you fancy that the Landgrave, my brother, will marry you unless you

become something very different from what you are, you are much mistaken."

But the prayers and tears of "the dear St. Elizabeth" were not poured forth in vain. Though far from her earthly father, her Father in heaven watched over her continually, and contrary to the expectation of her enemies, the young Landgrave never swerved from his faithful affection to his betrothed. He loved her the better for the virtues which drew upon her the contempt and hatred of the court, and took every opportunity permitted by the watchful jealousy of his mother to visit and comfort her. He never left home without bringing her some little present—a crucifix, a coral rosary, a holy picture, a jewel, a chain of gold, something in short which she had not before. She would run joyously to meet him on his return, and receive his gifts as a precious proof that he had remembered her in his absence.

Once, however, when he had been hunting with some foreign nobles, who did not leave him till his return, Louis neglected to bring the accustomed present. The omission was triumphantly noticed by the enemies of Elizabeth, as a sign of a change of feeling in her betrothed. The lonely and persecuted girl keenly felt the neglect, and complained of it to her old friend and protector Walter of Varila, who had brought her from Hungary. He promised to speak of it to his

lord. An opportunity of doing so soon occurred, for he was summoned to accompany Louis on a hunting excursion. As they were resting themselves together on the grass, within sight of Inselburg, the highest mountain in Thuringia, lord Walter said to the young Landgrave, "will you be pleased, my lord, to answer a question I am about to ask you?" "Assuredly;" said the prince. "Then," said the knight, "what do you purpose doing with the Lady Elizabeth whom I brought to you. Will you take her for your wife, or will you break your plighted troth and send her back to her father?"

Louis sprang to his feet, and stretching forth his hand towards Inselburg, he said: "Dost thou see that mountain before us? were it all of purest gold from its base to its summit, and all were offered me to send away my Elizabeth I would never do it. Let them say or think what they will: I say this, that I love her, and love nothing better in this world. I will have my Elizabeth; she is dearer to me for her virtue and piety than all the kingdoms and riches of the earth." "I beg of you, my lord," said Walter, "to permit me to repeat these words to her." "Do so," said Louis, "and tell her also that I will never give ear to those who counsel me against her, and give her this as a pledge of my faith;" so saying, he put into his hands a little double cased mirror set in silver, wherein was a picture of our crucified Lord. The knight hastened with the mirror to Elizabeth, who smiled with great joy, and thanked him for having thus acted towards her as a father and friend, then opening the mirror, she fervently kissed the picture of our Lord, and pressed it to her heart.

Louis soon redeemed his word as a knight and a prince, and his marriage with Elizabeth was celebrated with great pomp at the castle of Wartburg in 1220. Louis was but twenty, Elizabeth only thirteen; they loved each other, we are told, in God with an inconceivable affection, and therefore did the holy angels dwell continually with them.

CHAPTER II.

Elizabeth's husband.—The holiness and happiness of their union.

Louis of Thuringia, "the good Landgrave," as he was wont to be called, was worthy to be the husband of a saint. Except in the person of his glorious namesake St. Louis of France, no more perfect picture of the Christian knight and prince has ever been presented to us. His very exterior bore the impress of the noble character within, and many imagined that in his majestic form, his long hair and smile of irresistible

sweetness, they saw a striking resemblance to the traditional portrait of the Word made flesh.

He was distinguished from his earliest years for his angelic purity; he was modest and bashful as a girl, and most reserved in his conversation and demeanour, nor did the atmosphere of a court and the early possession of sovereign power ever sully the brightness of this maidenly purity.

The young Landgrave's courage was such as to fill up the other side of the knightly character; he was without fear as without reproach, and his bodily strength and agility equalled the grace and dignity of his person. The emperor having made him a present of a lion, he was walking one morning unarmed in the court yard, when the savage beast, who had escaped from his den, ran roaring towards him. Without a symptom of fear Louis stood firm, trusting in God, and clenching his hands, he threatened the lion, who came wagging his tail, and lay down at his feet. Some of the vassals who saw their lord's danger came to his assistance, and the lion suffered himself to be chained without resistance, to the amazement of the bystanders, who looked upon this power over savage beasts as a testimony of the Divine favour granted to the piety of the prince, and the sanctity of the young Elizabeth. To his courage Louis added that noble courtesy which St. Francis called the sister of charity. Towards women his bearing was full of gentle reverence, to his inferiors

he shewed unvarying kindness and affability. He never repulsed any one by pride or coldness, but delighted to give pleasure to all who approached him.

The only passion which seemed to have any sway over him was a love of justice, which, in the cause of God and the oppressed, could be energetic even to sternness, while he seemed insensible to personal injuries. If any of his servants gave him cause of offence, he would simply say: "Dear children, do not act thus again; you grieve my heart." In short the whole 'life and character of Elizabeth's husband may be summed up in the noble device chosen by him in his boyhood: "Piety, chastity, justice."

The love of Louis for his saintly bride rested as we have seen on her loveliness before God, the interior beauty of a character which he was well able to appreciate, though, spite of the railleries of the court beauties at the royal "Beguine," Elizabeth was endowed, according to the testimony of her contemporaries, with extraordinary personal beauty, and a grace and dignity of bearing befitting the descendant of Charlemagne.

Never did wedded love more truly typify the union of Christ with his church than in the pure and deep affection of this holy and happy pair. Notwithstanding her extreme youth and the almost infantine vivacity of her love for her husband, Elizabeth never forgot the deep reverence which she owed him as the representative of her heavenly bridegroom. She hastened to obey

his slightest sign, or lightest word, and kept watchful guard over her least action and most insignificant expression, lest she should in any way grieve or displease him. But the yoke she bore was one of love and peace, for Louis not only left her at full liberty in the exercise of her works of piety and mercy, but encouraged and supported her, only cautioning her with loving prudence when her youthful eagerness would have carried her beyond the limits of a safe discretion.

Elizabeth was in the constant practice of rising at midnight to meditate upon the birth of our Lord in the cold and darkness of a winter's night. Her husband would sometimes awake, and finding her kneeling by the bed side entreat her to lie down to rest: "Dear sister," he would say, "take care of thyself, and go to rest." Then he would take her hand and hold it till she returned to her bed, or till he fell asleep with it locked in his, and she would wet with her tears that beloved hand which alone seemed to link her with earth. And so hand in hand they went on their way to heaven.

They could never bear to be separated, so that whenever it was possible the Landgrave took his young wife with him on the journeys which his duties to his subjects obliged him to undertake. Neither storm, nor heat, nor snow deterred her from bearing him company on the roughest road, and on the most toilsome course.

She suffered nothing to separate her from him, who never sought to separate her from Christ.

It sometimes, however, happened that on a distant expedition, Louis was obliged to leave her at home, and she then laid aside the royal robes which she wore but to please him, and putting on widow's weeds, spent the time of his absence in vigil, fast and mortification. On his return she arrayed herself again in her richest dress, and hastened to meet him with the eager joy of a child. Elizabeth could never bring herself to sit at a distance from her lord at table, as was the custom of ladies of her rank, but her seat was always placed next to his, and her gentle and holy presence served as a check upon the light and thoughtless talk of the young knights around them.

So bright and blessed were the days of "the dear Saint's" wedded life, that she seemed to tremble under the excess of her happiness, and sought safety from it in the exercise of the severest mortifications. Her love for her husband, intense as it was, reached not to the surface of those still waters whereon the image of Jesus was mirrored in the depth of her soul. She would leave his side in the cold silence of the night, to take a severe discipline in memory of the cruel scourging which had been endured for her; she wore hair cloth under her royal robes, and continued to exercise the most austere abstinence in the midst of the

ducal banquets. But the severity with which she treated herself never made her sad or morose. She would return to her husband or her guests after the infliction of these austerities, with a bright and gladsome countenance which shed peace and joy around her. She could not endure any display of devotion, or any affectation of solemnity, and said of such as put on an exaggerated gravity of demeanour-"They seem as if they wished to frighten the good God; why do they not give Him what they can cheerfully, and with a good will?" She refused not to bear her part in the festivities over which her rank often called upon her to preside, and could take her place in the dance or give the prize at the tournament without disturbing the interior recollection in which her soul was ever at peace before God.

Yet, though thus free from scrupulosity, the young Landgravine was inflexible whenever she saw that duty required her to be so. She was on one occasion forbidden by her confessor to taste certain articles of food, on which, as he conceived, an oppressive tax had been laid by the prince's ministers. Her obedience sometimes sent her fasting from the splendid banquets where she presided at her husband's side, and where she concealed her abstinence by every art in her power. Some of her ladies, who imitated her in this mortification, testified that she sometimes tasted nothing but a piece of dry bread. She would go through all the

offices of the castle, making the most minute enquiries as to the origin of all the food which was to be served up at the Landgrave's table, and when she found that there was nothing forbidden, she would clap her hands with childlike delight, and say to her maidens: "We shall be well off to-day, we may eat and drink without fear."

There are many touching traditions of the tender care by which her Divine Lord sweetened the privations endured for his sake. Once during her husband's absence, Elizabeth sat down to her solitary meal of dry bread and water; Louis, happening to return unexpectedly, raised his wife's cup to his lips in token of affection, and to his great surprise found it full of a richer wine than he had ever tasted before. On enquiring of the steward whence he had drawn it, he was told that the Landgravine's cup was never filled with anything but water. Louis held his peace, but inwardly acknowledged that the wedding guest of Cana had been pleased to bless the cup of cold water poured out in His name, and for the love of His poor.

The tender charity which had distinguished Elizabeth from her earliest infancy now flowed forth without restraint, under the indulgent and fostering eye of her husband, and won for her the sweet name which she bears to this day of "Patroness of the poor." She restricted her own personal expenses to the absolute necessities of her position, and often gave away her

own clothes when she had no other means of supplying the wants of her poor suppliants.

On one occasion she was met by a crowd of beggars, among whom she distributed all the money she had with her; one poor man alone was left unrelieved, and, touched by his piteous complaint, the Landgravine took off one of her jewelled and embroidered gloves and gave it to him. A young knight in her train instantly turned and followed the beggar, from whom he bought the precious glove, which he fastened upon the crest of his helmet as a pledge of the Divine protection. From that moment, as he declared, on his death-bed, the lance of that knight was ever victorious on battlefield and tournament. He bore Elizabeth's glove through many a glorious day in Palestine, and as the proud infidels sank beneath his victorious arm, little did they dream that it owed its invincible force to the silken glove of "the dear St. Elizabeth."

But it was not by gifts alone that she sought to testify her love for the poor of Christ, it was by the patient personal devotion so dear to their hearts and to His. No road was too rough or too steep for her to travel, no cabin too miserable or too noisome to be visited by her gentle presence and cheered by her gladsome smile, no service too great or too little for her to render to those in whom she recognised the presence of her Lord. She devoted herself especially to the

care of the lepers, whose most revolting ulcers she would wash and kiss with heroic charity.

Once during her husband's absence she excited the extreme displeasure of his mother, the Landgravine Sophia, by placing one of these unhappy beings in her own bed.

The Landgrave returned to the castle just when Elizabeth was busied in dressing the leper's sores. His mother met him as he was dismounting from his horse. "Fair son," said she, "come with me and I will shew you a wonderful proceeding of your Elizabeth." "What do you mean?" replied Louis in a tone of displeasure, for he was accustomed to the carping tone in which his mother was wont to speak of his saintly wife. "Only come and see," replied Sophia, "you will see some one whom she loves much better than you." Then, taking him by the hand, she led him into his own room, and pointing to the bed: "See now, dear son," said she, "your wife lays lepers upon your bed, spite of all I can say to her, and will give you the leprosy: you see it yourself." Louis could not resist a slight movement of impatience; he snatched away the covering of the bed, when, says the historian, "the Lord opened the eyes of his soul," and he saw stretched upon his bed One whom alone Elizabeth loved better than himself, the crucified form of Him who for us was accounted as a leper. He was speechless with amazement, as was also the proud Landgravine. At last he burst into tears, and turning to his wife, "Elizabeth," said he, "my sweet sister, I pray thee often bring such strangers to my bed, they shall ever be welcome, and let no one trouble thee in the exercise of thy sweet charity." And then he knelt down and prayed thus to God: "O Lord, have mercy on me a miserable sinner; I am not worthy to behold all these wonders, I know it too well, but help me to become a man after Thine own heart, and according to Thy divine will."

Elizabeth took advantage of the deep impression left by this event upon her husband's mind, to obtain his leave to erect a hospital midway up the rock on which the Castle of Wartburg stands, for the reception of twenty-eight sick or infirm persons chosen from among those who were too weak to be able to climb to the castle itself. She visited them daily, and carried them food with her own hands; she performed also the same labour of love for the poor whose scattered huts lay in the vallies around.

As, with one faithful attendant, she was once slowly descending a very steep rough path, still shewn as the scene of the following miracle, and known by the name of knie brechen—"knee breaker," Elizabeth suddenly came upon her husband and his knightly train returning from a day's hunting. She was bending under the weight of bread, meat, eggs and other food, which she was carrying to the sick poor. Louis in-

sisted upon knowing with what she was laden, and opening her mantle, which she folded tight around her, saw to his amazement that it was filled with red and white roses, more beautiful than any he had ever beheld, which amazed him the more as the season for roses had been long passed. Seeing the trouble of "the dear Saint" at this public manifestation of miraculous favour, Louis sought to soothe her by caresses, but drew back in reverential awe at the sight of a luminous appearance in the form of a crucifix, which was visible over her head. He bade her proceed on her way, and rode slowly home, pondering deeply on the wonders God was ever working through his blessed wife, and carrying with him one of the miraculous roses which he kept till the day of his death. afterwards raised a pillar on the spot surmounted by a cross, in memory of that which he had there seen hovering over the head of Elizabeth.

Living thus with and for the poor, it is no marvel that God inspired her with that love of poverty which has marked so many of the souls which have been richest in His grace. This king's daughter, at fifteen, in the midst of the chivalry of Germany, already burned with the same desire of evangelical poverty by which the Seraph of Assisi set fire to the world. In the flower of her youth and beauty that fire had already burned up the last roots of worldly glory and pride: "in her sovereign estate," says an old writer, "she

longed for the estate of poverty, that the world might have no part in her, and that she might be poor as Jesus Christ was poor."

She made her husband the confident of all the holy and secret reveries of her childlike imagination, and of all her lofty yet lowly aspirations after a life of evangelical perfection. The royal lady's ideas of poverty were at this period somewhat different from the stern reality which she afterwards endured in her own person.

One night, as she and the Landgrave lay awake in their bed, Elizabeth thus addressed him: "Sire, if it would not weary you, I should like to tell you a thought I have had as to a way of life which we might lead the better to serve God." "Tell me, then, sweet friend," said her husband, "what is this thought of your's." "I wish," said she, "that we had but one small farm which would just yield us enough to live upon, and about two hundred sheep, and then you could till the ground, manage the horses, and endure all these toils for the love of God; and I could take care of the sheep and shear them." The Landgrave smiled at his wife's simplicity, and replied: "Sweet sister, if we had all this land and all these sheep, I do not think we should be very poor, nay, some might think us still too rich."

What would have been the anguish of that noble heart if he could have forseen that, only a few years later, that loved and loving wife, whom he cherished so tenderly and reverenced so devoutly, should be cast forth from her princely home, to live houseless, friendless, childless, in a destitution of all outward things equal to that of her great father, St. Francis, and in a solitude of heart far severer than his.

She had asked to drink of her Lord's chalice, knowing not its depth, and He filled it for her to the brim. In her youthful imagination her husband was associated with all her visions of a devoted and penitential life. The sweet ingredient of human affection was to temper the draught, but He gave it to her, as He drank it Himself on Calvary, full of the red vintage which must be trodden alone

CHAPTER III.

Fervent piety of St. Elizabeth.—She receives the cord of St. Francis.—Various miracles attesting her sanctity.—Birth of her first child.—Master Conrad is appointed her confessor.

THE fervent charity of "the dear Saint" towards man sprang, as may well be believed, from her ardent love to God; it was consecrated by unceasing prayer, and fed by frequent communion.

At the holy sacrifice of the mass, as she knelt in profound recollection, her hands meekly folded beneath her mantle, her ducal coronet and ornaments cast down before the footstool of the King of kings, and her veil raised that she might behold His hidden beauty, the ministering priest beheld her surrounded by a supernatural light, and thanked God for having thus made manifest the interior glory of her soul. It was her practice to pass the whole night of holy Thursday in prayer and contemplation of the passion of Christ, and when Good Friday dawned, she would say to her maidens, "this is a day of humiliation to us all; let none of you therefore presume to offer me any token of respect." She would then dress herself in peasant's clothes, and go barefoot from one church to another, mingling with the lowest of the people, who crushed and jostled her like one of themselves, and make her humble offering of a poor taper or a few grains of incense, as if she had been the poorest of the poor: thus doing violence to the royal generosity of her heart, on a day which she said was better honoured by a humble and contrite spirit, than by the most lavish and princely offerings.

An anecdote, which is told by her chaplain, Berthold, serves to shew the scrupulous delicacy with which she watched over the slightest swerving of her thoughts and affections when in the holy presence of God. As she was hearing mass on some high festival in the church of St. George at Eisenach, she forgot the sanctity of the sacrifice, and allowed her eyes and

thoughts to dwell for some considerable time upon the beloved husband who was kneeling by her side. heart swelled within her as she gazed upon his princely brow, and thought of all the noble and holy gifts so visibly impressed upon it. She was still indulging in this dream of human affection when the bell rang for the elevation. Elizabeth raised her eyes in deep compunction to the altar, and, instead of the consecrated Host, beheld in the hand of the priest the crucified and bleeding form of the Divine Spouse, Whom she had for a moment forgotten in the beloved presence of her earthly lord. She fell prostrate upon the ground before the altar to implore pardon for her fault, and remained there bathed in tears until the hour of dinner. The attendants dared not interrupt their lady in her devotions; and at last, finding that she did not appear as usual to receive her guests, the Landgrave himself went in search of her, and said gently: "Dear sister, why do you not come to dinner? why have you kept us waiting so long?" At the sound of his voice she raised her head and looked at him in silence, and he saw that her eyes were red with weeping. sister," said he in great distress, "why have you been weeping so bitterly?" Then he knelt down beside her to listen to her tale, and when he had heard it, began to weep and pray with her. After a while he rose and said to Elizabeth, "let us have confidence in God, sweet sister; I will be no hindrance to thee, but will

help thee to do penance, and to become still better than thou art."

But seeing that she was too much oppressed with grief to be able to appear at the banquet, he dried his own eyes and returned to his guests, leaving Elizabeth alone to weep over her fault.

It was in 1221—the year following her marriage—that the "dear Saint" was received into the third Order of St. Francis, just then founded for persons living in the world. She was the first in Germany to assume a habit which has since been worn by so many saints.

After the death of her husband, she bound herself by vow to a life of absolute poverty, chastity, and obedience. She is hence accounted the patroness of that later development of the original design of St. Francis, which exists, under various modifications, as a religious order, while St. Louis is the patron of the secular Tertiaries.

There was a deep sympathy between the holy patriarch and his royal daughter; and it has been noticed as a singular coincidence, that the date of her birth was the same as that of his conversion. The missionaries of St. Francis met with the fullest encouragement from the Landgravine of Thuringia, who founded a Franciscan church and convent in her own capital of Eisenach, on their first introduction into Germany, and chose Brother Rodinger, one of the

first Germans who embraced the rule, for her own confessor.

At the request of his friend, Cardinal Ugolini, who was afterwards to be the protector of St. Elizabeth on earth, and to write her name in the calendar of the saints, St. Francis sent her the old mantle which he wore as a pledge of his fatherly affection.

"I wish," said the Cardinal, "that, as she is full of your spirit, you should leave her a legacy like that of Elias to his disciple Eliseus."

Elizabeth received the precious mantle, and the letter which accompanied it, with the deepest gratitude, and always wore it when she had any special favour to ask of God.

In the year following Elizabeth's marriage, some nobles of her father's court returning from a pilgrimage to Aix-la-Chapelle, came, by his command, to Wartburg, to enquire after the welfare of his beloved child. The Landgrave received them joyfully, but was suddenly struck with a perplexing thought. The royal bride had already altered her wedding robes to what she conceived to be a more modest fashion, and there was no time to provide any more. Louis, therefore, came with a face of anxiety to her chamber.

"Dear sister," said he, "here are some of your father's courtiers come to visit us. I am sure that they are come to see what state we keep here, and whether you have a train befitting a princess. But in what array can you appear before them? You are so busy with your poor that you forget yourself. You will never wear anything but these miserable old clothes, which are a disgrace to us both. What a dishonour will it be to me if they return to Hungary and say I let you want clothes, seeing that they find you in so wretched a condition; and now there is no time to provide anything befitting your rank and mine."

But she replied gently, "My dear lord and brother, trouble not yourself about this, for I am well resolved never to set pride upon my dress. Leave me to excuse myself to these lords, and I will try to treat them with so much gaiety and cordiality, that they shall be as well pleased with me as if I had on the finest dresses in the world."

Then she went and prayed to God to make her pleasing to her friends, and having dressed herself as well as she could, went to join her husband and her father's messengers. She not only charmed them by her cordial and gracious welcome, and by the rare grace and beauty of her person, but, to the great admiration of her guests, and the utter amazement of the Landgrave, she appeared arrayed in robes of gorgeous silk, and a blue mantle sprinkled with costly pearls. The Hungarians said that the Queen of France herself could not be more royally attired.

When they were gone, Louis came in great haste to

ask his wife how she had contrived to dress herself so magnificently. Elizabeth replied with a grave sweet smile, "See what the Lord can do when He pleases."

The next year, 1222, Louis took his bride to visit her father in Hungary, by whom they were both received with great joy and affection; and soon after their return he celebrated, with great pomp, the marriage of his beautiful sister Agnes, with Henry, Duke of Austria. As the guests were sitting down to table, they remarked that the Landgravine had not taken her place as usual, and declared that they would not begin without her. Meanwhile, as Elizabeth was passing from the church to the banquetting hall, she had seen a miserable half-naked man lying at the foot of the staircase, who looked so wretchedly ill and weak, that she wondered within herself how he had been able to drag himself up from the town to the castle. As soon as he saw the Landgravine he besought her, for Christ's sake, to bestow an alms upon him. She said that she had no time to attend to him, and that, moreover, she had nothing left to give, but that she would send him food from the banquet. But the poor man besought her so piteously to give him something at once, that, overcome by compassion, the Landgravine took off the costly silken mantle which she wore, and threw it to him. He rolled it up hastily, and disappeared.

Elizabeth dared not enter the banquetting hall with-

out a mantle, which would have been a grievous infringement of court etiquette, and returned to her
chamber to recommend herself to God. But the
seneschal, who had seen what passed, went and told it
to his lord in presence of all the guests. "Judge, my
lord," said he, "if what my dear lady the Landgravine
has just done be reasonable. While all these noble
lords have been waiting for her, she has been clothing
the poor, and has just given her rich mantle to a
beggar." The good Landgrave laughed and said,
"I must go and see what she is about: she will
come immediately."

Leaving his guests for a moment, he went to Elizabeth's chamber. "Dearest sister," said he, "are you not coming to dine with us? We should have been at table long ago if we had not been waiting for you."

"I am quite ready to do your pleasure, dearest brother," said she. "But where is the mantle you had on at church?" said the Landgrave. "I have given it away, my good brother," replied she; "but if you will permit me, I will come as I am." Just then one of her maidens came into the room, saying, "Lady, I have just seen your mantle hanging upon a nail in the wardrobe, and will bring it to you immediately." And she came back with the mantle in her hand which the poor man had just carried away. Elizabeth fell on her knees to make a short thanksgiving to God, and then went with her husband to the

feast; but while the bride and bridegroom, and the rest of that fair company were full of careless mirth, the Landgrave Louis was serious and recollected, pondering upon the signal graces which were lavished upon his Elizabeth, "for it is plain," says one of her pious historians, "that it was an angel from heaven who brought back the mantle, and that it was Christ Himself in the form of that poor beggar, who came to try His well beloved Elizabeth, as He had before tried His servant Martin.

In the year 1223, Elizabeth, at the age of sixteen, gave birth to her first child at the Castle of Creutzburg, a few miles distant from Eisenach, whither she had been removed, for greater quiet, from her usual residence at Wartburg. The infant son was baptized by the name of Herman, after his grandfather; and in the following year a daughter was born, named Sophia, the ancestress of the reigning family of Hesse. Elizabeth had afterwards two other daughters, who were consecrated to God in their cradle, and died in religion.

It was the Saint's constant practice, after the birth of each of her children, as soon as she was able to leave the house, to take her new-born babe in her arms, and dressed in a simple woollen garment, to walk barefoot by a steep and rugged path to the distant church of St. Catherine, without the walls of Eisenach. Carrying her child in her arms, like our

Blessed Mother on the day of her purification, she laid it upon the altar, with a taper and a lamb, saying, "O Lord Jesus Christ, I offer this precious fruit of my womb to Thee and Thy dear Mother Mary. Behold, I restore it with all my heart, such as Thou did'st give it to me, to Thee, who art the Lord and the most loving Father, both of the mother and the child. The only prayer which I will address to Thee to-day, and the only favour which I dare to ask of Thee, is that Thou wilt be pleased to receive this little child, bathed with my tears, into the number of Thy friends and servants, and to give it Thy holy blessing."

When Elizabeth was about seventeen, she lost her Franciscan confessor, Rodinger, and, at the request of the Landgrave, who wrote to ask a pious and learned director for his wife, the Sovereign Pontiff appointed Master Conrad, of Marburg, then Apostolic Commissary in Germany, to the office. He was a holy and learned priest, who had steadily declined all the high ecclesiastical dignities which his noble birth, as well as his great merit, placed within his reach, to embrace a poverty so austere as to lead several historians incorrectly to assert that he belonged to a religious order. He was employed by the great Pope Innocent III. on a special mission to suppress the heresies of the Waldenses and the poor men of Lyons, which were gradually finding their way into Germany.

During the twenty years in which he exercised this arduous office, he shewed himself worthy of it by his unwearied zeal and the fearless confidence with which he maintained the truth in the face of the great ones of the earth, when they too often lent the weight of their feudal authority to the heresies which indulged and fostered their evil passions.

He sealed his faithful service with his blood, yet the Church has not allotted to him the martyr's palm, bestowed upon St. Peter of Verona, who died about the same time for the faith, on account of a certain excessive severity which mingled with his zeal, and of which we find traces in his direction of St. Elizabeth. It was the direction, doubtless, best fitted to bring her to the high place in heaven which she so early attained. She might have been less saintly, or less early a saint, had a saint been her director.

When the young Landgravine was told that she was to be placed under the special care of a man so highly esteemed for piety and learning, she was filled with humble gratitude. "Poor sinful woman that I am," said she, "I am not worthy that so holy a man should take care of me. My God, I thank Thee for this grace." She threw herself at his feet, saying, "My spiritual Father, deign to accept me for your daughter in Christ. I am indeed unworthy to be such, but receive me for the love of my brother." Conrad was so much moved by this deep humility in so

illustrious a princess, that he could not refrain from exclaiming: "O Lord Jesus, what marvels dost Thou work in the souls which are Thine!"

With the permission of Louis, Elizabeth made a vow of obedience to her director in all things not contrary to her husband's rightful authority, adding to this a vow of perpetual chastity in case of his decease. She made these two yows in the hands of Master Conrad in the Church of the Nuns of St. Catherine at Eisenach. She observed her vow of obedience with the most scrupulous fidelity—an instance of which we have already seen in her strict abstinence from forbidden food at her husband's table. Conrad was most rigid in enforcing this obedience. On one occasion he had summoned her to attend one of his sermons, to the hearing of which an indulgence was attached. She was at the moment receiving a visit from her sister-inlaw, the Margravine of Misnia, and, thinking that she could not leave her guest without discourtesy, she disregarded the summons of her director, who, in consequence, sent her word that he could no longer undertake the care of her soul. She flew to him next morning to implore pardon for her fault. He repulsed her at first with the greatest harshness, though she knelt humbly at his feet, and only pardoned her at last on condition that she and some of her ladies who had shared her fault should undergo a severe discipline.

CHAPTER IV.

Zeal of the good Landgrave in protecting the oppressed.—He is summoned to attend the Emperor, Frederic II.—Famine in Thuringia.—Charity of "the dear Saint Elizabeth."—Return of Louis.

WHILE the life of the "dear Saint Elizabeth" was devoted to lovely deeds of charity to the poor and sick members of Christ, the good lance of her chivalrous lord was consecrated to the protection of the oppressed. He undertook a war against the Duke of Poland simply because he had refused redress to some merchants from Thuringia, who had been robbed and illtreated on their way through Poland. Greatly did the Thuringian chivalry marvel that their lord should set foot in stirrup for so trifling a matter as the property or lives of a few merchants, but they could not choose but follow him; and in three days' time the town of Serbantsk, where the outrage had been committed, was burnt, and its castle besieged by the Landgrave's troops. The Duke of Poland, who had never dreamed that a Landgrave of Thuringia would come so far to invade his dominions, sent him offers of pecuniary satisfaction, but Louis replied that he had better have done so when he wrote courteously to him from a distance, and that he had no mind to come so far for nothing; and he pressed the siege.

The Polish prince then sent a bishop to remonstrate with the Landgrave, and to assure him that if he did not return home without delay, the Poles, who were famous warriors, would fall upon him, under their prince, on the following Monday, and exterminate his army. Louis replied that he desired nothing better than to make acquaintance with the Duke of Poland, and that, not to hurry him, he would wait eight days after the Monday named by him, in order to see what sort of people his Poles were. But neither Duke nor Poles appeared; the castle surrendered, and Louis, having razed it to the ground, returned to Thuringia, leaving behind him a reputation for courage, justice, and love of his people, which was not soon forgotten in Eastern Germany.

Some time afterwards he drew his sword in a yet more insignificant quarrel. As he was amusing himself at the annual fair of Eisenach with inspecting the different stalls, he saw a poor pedlar with a very small pack, from which he was selling thimbles, needles, leaden images, and other feminine ware. The Landgrave asked him if he could make a living out of this little traffic. "Well, my lord," said the pedlar, "I am ashamed to beg, and I am not strong enough for daily labour; but if I could only travel in safety from one town to another, I could, by the grace of God, earn my daily bread, and moreover, by the end of the year make my pack worth a little more than it was at the be-

ginning. "Well," said the good Landgrave, "I will give you my safe conduct for a year, and you shall pay neither toll nor tax throughout all my dominions. What do you reckon to be the value of your pack?" "Twenty shillings," replied the pedlar. "Give him ten shillings," said Louis to his treasurer, "and get a safe conduct made out for him, sealed with my seal." Then, turning to the pedlar, he said: "I mean to go halves with you in your trade. Promise me that you will be a faithful partner to me, and I will engage to keep you harmless." The poor man was delighted, and set off upon his new career, which was so successful that at the end of the year he brought back his pack to his noble partner considerably increased in value. The Landgrave took a few trifling articles as his share of the property, which he distributed among his servants. The pedlar made his appearance faithfully at the beginning of every new year to give an account of his profits, which soon became so considerable that he was obliged to buy an ass to carry the weight of his increased wealth.

But about the end of the year 1225, as he was returning from Venice,—whither he had gone to purchase various precious and curious articles of Venetian manufacture,—he was set upon at Wurzburg, in Franconia, by some of the inhabitants, who thought they should much like to have some love tokens for their wives and daughters without the cost of paying

for them, so they carried off the poor man's ass and all his merchandize, in utter contempt of the safe conduct of the Landgrave of Thuringia. The pedlar barely escaped with his life, and arrived in piteous plight at Eisenach to complain to his lord and partner of his misfortune.

"My dear comrade," said the prince, laughing, "do not disturb yourself so much at the loss of our merchandize: have a little patience, and leave me to recover it." Then he summoned all the counts, knights, and squires in the neighbourhood, together with a good company of peasants who fought on foot, and, entering Franconia at their head, devastated the whole country to the gates of Wurzburg, enquiring everywhere for his ass.

The Prince Bishop of Wurzburg, astonished at this sudden invasion, sent to ask the Landgrave what he meant by so strange a proceeding. Louis replied that he was come to seek an ass of his, which had been stolen from him by some of the Bishop's men. The Bishop immediately caused the ass and its burthen to be restored to its owner, who returned with it in triumph, to the great delight and admiration of the common people, who hailed him as their champion and defender.

Louis was now summoned by the Emperor Frederic II. to aid him in his campaign in Italy, where he served with great courage and distinction; and during

his absence a calamity befel Thuringia which gave fresh scope to the tender charity of his saintly wife.

A dreadful famine prevailed over the whole of Germany, pressing most heavily upon Thuringia, in the year 1226. The famished people were scattered through the woods and fields collecting such roots and wild fruits as usually served only for the food of beasts. They devoured horses, asses, and all manner of revolting things; and the roads were strewn with the bodies of the dying and the dead.

Elizabeth's heart swelled within her at the misery of her husband's subjects, and her sole thought and occupation during his absence was their relief. She began by distributing all the money in the treasury, which, in consequence of the recent sale of some of the Landgrave's lands, amounted to 6400 golden florins-an enormous sum in those days. Then she opened her husband's granaries, and in spite of the opposition of the officers of his household, distributed the whole contents among the people. Yet this boundless liberality was directed by the strictest prudence. Instead of giving away the corn in large quantities, which might have been heedlessly squandered, she distributed daily to each person the portion necessary for his subsistence, which had been previously baked in the ovens of the castle to save the poor pensioners all needless expense. Nine hundred poor were thus daily relieved.

But there was a still greater number prevented by sickness or infirmity from climbing the steep ascent to the castle, and these were the objects of the Landgravine's especial care. With her own hands she carried them food from her own table, which she and her ladies scarcely dared to touch for fear of diminishing the portion of the poor. She placed the sick who required especial care in the hospital, which she had founded half-way up the castle hill, and established two other hospitals in the city of Eisenach, one of which remains to this day. Twice every day did the young Landgravine descend the steep declivity between the castle and these two hospitals, to minister, with her own hands, to their suffering inmates. Her attendants murmured loudly at the closeness and bad smells of the sick rooms in the intense heat of summer, but though naturally peculiarly susceptible to such inconveniences, Elizabeth persevered in her labour of love without shewing, by word or look, that she was even conscious of their existence.

In one of these hospitals she had an asylum for sick, orphan, or deserted children. The poor little creatures crowded round her as soon as she appeared among them, clinging to her dress, and crying "Mother! mother!"

The time which remained after her visits to the hospitals was devoted by "the dear Saint" to seeking

out the sick and suffering in their own miserable homes, and visiting the prisoners in the castle dungeons. While thus engaged she was continually lifting up her heart in prayer, and sometimes her interior communings with God would become audible to those around her. Thus she was once heard to utter the following words in the hospital: "How can I thank Thee enough, O Lord, for enabling me to gather together these poor people, who are Thy dearest friends, and permitting me thus to serve them myself?" An angel was heard to reply, "Rejoice, Elizabeth, for thou also art the friend of the living God, and dost shine as the moon in his sight."

Other miraculous signs testified the Divine favour towards her. As she was returning from the town, whither she had gone to buy some glass and earthenware toys for the poor little children in the hospital, her carriage was overturned, by the awkwardness of the driver, upon a heap of stones. She was unhurt by the accident, and not one of the little playthings which she was carrying wrapped up in a fold of her mantle was broken. Another time she had her apron full of broken meat, which she was distributing among a group of miserable beggars, when she saw a fresh company come up just as she had discovered that she had not nearly enough for the first. She continued, however, to give piece after piece, praying all the while in

her heart, and as fast as one was given it was replaced by another, till she had fed the whole party without emptying her apron.

The Landgravine did not confine her care to the poor immediately around her;—the most distant portions of her husband's dominions had a share in her motherly solicitude; and when the public funds failed to relieve their wants, she sold all her jewels and valuable possessions to supply the deficiency.

Elizabeth continued these extraordinary succours until the autumn of 1227 put an end to the extremity of the scarcity, when she assembled all the poor who were in a condition to work, gave to each a new shirt and pair of shoes, and sent them to work in the fields. To those who were not strong enough to work she gave a suit of clothes and a small sum of money; and when money failed, she took her silk robes and veils and divided them among the poor women, saying, "I do not give you these things to wear, but that you may sell them to supply your wants, and then work according to your strength, for it is written, "He that will not work let him not eat."

The people of Thuringia have forgotten the faith of their fathers, and the memory of the heretic Luther,* who found his patmos, as he modestly called it, at Wartburg, has overshadowed that of the dear Saint

^{*} He was sheltered at Wartburg by his protector, the Elector of Saxony, from the sentence of the Diet of Worms.

Elizabeth. His pulpit is now shewn as the chief object of interest in the chapel where she was wont to pray; but the pilgrim's eye can still trace from the castle height, which overlooks the magnificent landscape below, the steep and rugged paths so often trodden by the unwearied feet of "the princess of the poor." The site of the hospital erected near the gate of the ducal palace, still bears the name of its foundress. A Franciscan convent was built there in her honour in 1331, which, with seventeen other churches and convents in the town of Eisenach alone, was pillaged and destroyed in a single day at the time of the Reformation, the monks and priests withdrawing, two-and-two, in solemn procession from their blazing convents, amid the hissing and insults of the heretics, and chanting the Deum in thanksgiving that they had been accounted worthy to endure the loss of all things for Christ. The stones of the convent were used to repair the fortifications of the castle; but a little fountain of pure and living water, in which she had been used to wash the linen of the poor, still bears the name of St. Elizabeth; and the peasants call the little coppice wood, surrounded by a broken wall which shades the lonely fountain, Elizabeth's garden.

Meanwhile the Landgrave Louis, hearing of the distress of his subjects, obtained leave from the Emperor to return home. There was joy throughout all Thuringia at the presence of the beloved prince,

whose return was hailed by his famished people as the termination of all their miseries. His mother and young brothers rejoiced exceedingly, but no joy equalled that of Elizabeth. It had been her first long absence from that beloved husband, who was the sole confidant of all her holy and happy thoughts, and whose noble and unworldly character she alone thoroughly understood and appreciated.

The officers of the Landgrave's household, measuring his heart by their own, thought he would be much displeased at the lavish prodigality with which his treasures had been exhausted during his absence, and hastened to meet him on his way home in order to throw all the blame upon the Landgravine, who, as they said, had emptied all the granaries and spent all the money in the treasury of Wartburg, in spite of all their remonstrances.

Annoyed by these complaints at such a moment, Louis replied coldly: "Is my dear wife well?—that is all I want to know: what matters all the rest to me?" and then he added, "I wish you to leave my good little Elizabeth to give as much in alms as she pleases; and I would have you to aid instead of contradicting her. Let her give as much as she will, for so long as she leaves us Eisenach, Wartburg, and Naumburg, she will not ruin us by her almsgiving;" and he hastened on to greet his beloved wife, who, in the words of Berthold, an eye-witness of the scene, "threw herself into his arms

and kissed him a thousand times over, with her lips and her heart." "Dear sister," said Louis, as he held her in his arms, "what has become of all your poor people during this bad year?" She replied gently, "I have given to God what belonged to Him, and God has preserved for us what belongs to thee and to me."

Tradition adds, that as Louis and Elizabeth were walking up and down the great hall together in long and earnest discourse, they saw corn pouring in under the doors, and through the crevices of the flooring. The seneschal was sent to ascertain the cause, and brought back word that the coffers were so full of corn that it was pouring over, and finding its way through the flooring above the granary. And they returned thanks to God.

The first care of the Landgrave on his return, was to redress all the wrongs sustained from powerful men by the poor, or by religious communities, during his absence. One Saturday evening he visited the Benedictine Monastery of Rheinhartsbrunn, which was a favourite retreat of his, and heard from the abbot that a neighbouring chief, the Lord of Saltza, had taken forcible possession of a territory belonging to the monastery, on a mountain commanding the valley on which it stood, and had there erected a fortress, to the great annoyance of the religious. Louis wrote immediately to Wartburg for a party of men-at-arms to attend him early next morning with scaling ladders

At daybreak he heard a low mass, charged the abbot not to have the cross carried, nor high mass sung till his return, and then went to meet his soldiers, whom he led at once to attack the castle. The walls were scaled, and the Lord of Saltza taken prisoner. The Landgrave put him in irons and brought him to the abbey. On his arrival he caused the cross to be brought forth, and followed the usual procession before high mass, the usurping knight and his soldiers being led, bound, before the cross, the cantor entoning the versicle: Domine humiliasti sicut vulneratum superbum; and all the monks answering,—In brachio virtutis tuæ dispersisti inimicos tuos. "Thou hast humbled the proud, and with Thy mighty arm hast dispersed thine enemies."

After mass the Landgrave made the Lord of Saltza swear that he would do no further injury to the monastery, and then dismissed him, with orders for the immediate destruction of the castle which had been taken so early in the morning.

CHAPTER V.

The good Landgrave takes the Cross.—His Death.

The happiness of Elizabeth at her husband's return was but the prelude to a far more sorrowful parting. Germany was now ringing far and wide with the preparation for a new crusade. Scarcely forty years had passed away since the exploits of Richard of the Lionheart had stirred every brave spirit in Europe; and the splendid success of the fourth crusade, which had seated a French knight on the throne of the emperors of the east, and thus swept away a lurking and treacherous foe from the path to the sepulchre of Christ, seemed to call loudly on the chivalry of Christendom once more to set lance in rest for its deliverance.

The heart of Frederic II. had little sympathy with the noble instincts which attracted all faithful and loyal knights to Palestine, yet he was forced to yield at last to the repeated summons of Honorius III. and Gregory IX., and to call upon all the faithful of his empire to be ready to follow him to the Holy Land in the autumn of 1227. No sword was more promptly offered to the sacred cause than that of the young Landgrave of Thuringia. Louis the Pious, the brother and predecessor of his father, had fought bravely in

Palestine with Cœur de Lion and Philip Augustus; and King Andrew, of Hungary, the father of his beloved Elizabeth, had spent many years of his life in the East in conflict with the infidels. Louis longed to draw his sword in the same quarrel, and eagerly accepted the "flower of Christ,"—as the cross worn by the Crusaders was called in Germany,-from the hands of the venerable Bishop of Hildesheim. But as he rode home his heart sank within him at the thought of the anguish he was about to inflict upon his beloved wife, now soon to give birth to her fourth child; and he determined to conceal his intention, if possible, until near the time when he must carry it into effect. Instead, therefore, of wearing the cross openly, as was the custom with those about to engage in a crusade, he contented himself with carrying it secretly about him. But one evening, as she was sitting by him, Elizabeth playfully unfastened his girdle, and began to examine the contents of the purse which was fastened to it. The cross usually worn by crusaders fell out of the purse as she opened it, and in a moment she understood the full extent of the misfortune which threatened her, and sank senseless on the floor. Her terrified husband raised her tenderly, and when she came to herself sought to soothe her by the most affectionate and cheering words. He appealed to that faith and piety which he well knew to be the ruling principles of her life. "It is for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

said he, "that I go. You would not hinder me from doing for God what I should be obliged in honour to do for a temporal prince, for the empire, and the Emperor, were he to command me?" After a long fit of silent weeping, she said to him: "Dear brother, if it be not against the will of God, stay with me." But he replied, "Dear sister, let me go, for I have made a vow to God." Then Elizabeth recollected herself. She made an offering of her will to the will of God, and said to Louis, "Against the will of God I will not keep thee. May God give thee grace to do His will in all things. I have made Him the sacrifice of thee and of myself; may His goodness watch over thee; may all blessings be with thee for ever. This shall be my unceasing prayer. Go, then, in the name of God." After another long silence they spoke of their unborn child, whom they resolved to consecrate to God from the moment of its birth, if a son, in the Abbey of Ramersdorf; if a daughter, in the Convent of Aldenburg.

The Landgrave, having no longer any reason for concealing his intention, announced it publicly at a solemn assembly held at Creutzburg, before which he laid a plan for the government of the country during his absence, and exhorted the nobles who were to remain behind to rule their vassals with mildness and equity, and to preserve peace among themselves. Before the assembly broke up, he addressed it in the following words, which have been preserved by his

chaplain, Berthold, who attended him constantly during the latter years of his life. "Dear and faithful brothers in arms, barons, lords, and noble knights, and you, my faithful people,-you know that in the lifetime of my princely father, of pious memory, our country had to endure many cruel wars and long seasons of calamity. You know what labours, toils, and hardships my father sustained to preserve his dominions from utter ruin. He succeeded at last, by dint of courage and generosity, and his name is held in honour among us. But to me, God has granted, as to Solomon the son of David, peace and quiet days. I see no neighbours around me from whom I have anything to fear, as no man hath cause to dread lawless violence from me. You ought all to acknowledge this grace from God, and to give Him thanks for it. As to me, for the love of God, Who has crowned me with His favours, to testify my gratitude to Him, and for the salvation of my soul, I am going now into the land of the east to comfort and relieve that dear Christendom which is there most cruelly oppressed, and to defend it from the enemies of the name and blood of God. I shall make this expedition at my own cost, and without imposing any new burthen upon you, my loving subjects. I commend to the protection of the Most High my good and dearly loved wife, my little children, my dear brothers, my friends, my people, and my country-all, in short, that I willingly leave for the honour of His holy name.

I strictly charge you to keep peace together during my absence. I specially exhort the nobles to bear themselves like Christian men towards my poor people. Lastly, I beseech you all most earnestly to pray much to God for me, that He may preserve me from all misfortunes during this voyage, and bring me back among you safe and sound, if such be His holy will, for before all things I submit myself, and you, and all that I have, to the good pleasure of His divine majesty."

As the young Landgrave thus addressed the assembly in a voice which bore witness of the deep emotions of his heart, sobs burst forth from the steel-clad breasts around him, and tears rolled down the cheeks of the old warriors who had gone forth to battle with his father.

Having arranged all his affairs, he specially commended his wife to the care of his mother, his brothers, and the ministers of his household. "I know well," said the cellarer, "that my lady the Landgravine will give away everything she can lay her hands on, and bring us all to want." "I care little for that," said Louis; "God will be sure to restore whatever she gives away."

The Landgrave visited all the religious houses in Eisenach to bestow a parting alms, and ask prayers and blessings in return; and then, accompanied by his whole family, paid a last visit to his beloved monastery of Reynhartsbrunn. As the monks, according to

custom, left the choir after compline to receive the holy water, the prince standing beside the officiating priest, embraced each religious as he passed, and even lifted up each little chorister as he went by, to imprint a fatherly kiss upon his brow. The religious melted into tears, and the Landgrave himself was overcome by a sort of presentiment of the sorrows which were to follow his departure.

From Reynhartsbrunn he proceeded to Smalkald, where he had appointed the knights to meet him who were to accompany him to the Holy Land. There he was to take leave of his wife, his mother, and all who were dear to him. He took his brother Henry aside and said to him, "I have done what I could to walk in the path of salvation, and there is but one thing which troubles me now: it is that I have hitherto neglected to observe an injunction given me by my father to destroy the castle of Eyterburg, which was erected to the injury of the neighbouring convent. I pray you, therefore, sweet brother, to level it to the ground as soon as I am gone;—it will be for the salvation of your soul."

At last the day of departure came, which had been fixed for the nativity of St. John the Baptist. Louis was surrounded by all the knights from the extremities of his dominions, and by the people, who crowded round to take a last farewell of their beloved prince. He affectionately blessed his two weeping brothers, to

whom he earnestly commended his mother, his children. and his Elizabeth. His little children hung upon him and cried bitterly as they bade him farewell, saying in their baby language, "Good night, dear father !- many thousand times good night, dear, precious father!"* He could not restrain his tears as he embraced them: but when he turned to his beloved Elizabeth, the strong man's heart gave way utterly, and his sobs choked his utterance. He threw one arm round her, and the other round his mother, and held them both silently to his heart. At last he said,-" My dearest mother, I must leave you; but I leave you in my place your two other sons, Henry and Conrad. I commend to you my wife, whose anguish you see." When at last he tore himself from the arms of his mother, Louis found that he was still hemmed in by the knights who were to remain behind, and by crowds of the common people, to whom he had ever been so gracious a lord and so tender a father. They pressed round to embrace him, to kiss his hand, or at least to touch his clothes. But these were not the only partings that day. Among the host of crusaders who were to accompany the Landgrave, many a bursting heart was struggling with the feelings of husband, father, son, or brother; and the low moanings of wife, mother, and child mingled strangely with the triumphant swell of the hymns, in which the crusaders

^{*} Herzguldener vater-heart's golden father.

were returning thanks to God that He had deigned to call them to do battle for His name. Louis broke from the loving arms around him, and springing upon his horse, joined his voice to theirs who with heart and mouth were praising the Lord.

Elizabeth was still by his side. She could not bear to bid him farewell with the others, and obtained leave to accompany him as far as the frontiers of Thuringia. They rode in silence side by side, having no heart to speak. When they came to the frontier Elizabeth begged to go a little farther still, and made another day's journey; and after that another, for she knew not how to leave him, nor he how to bid her depart. At the end of the second day the Lord of Varila, the son of that true and faithful friend of Elizabeth, who had stood by her in all her early troubles, drew near to his lord and said: "My gracious lord, it is time for my lady the Landgravine to return: bid her depart, for indeed it must be." Then, as it they recognised the will of God in the words of this faithful servant, those two loving hearts clung to each other with a last embrace. It seemed even then as if they could not part. At last Louis, mastering his grief, gave the signal for departure. He shewed his wife a signet ring which he wore, and said, "Elizabeth, my truest, dearest sister, mark well this ring, on which is engraven the Lamb of God, with His banner: let this be to thee a sure and certain token in all

that relates to me. Whoever shall bring thee this ring, dear and faithful sister, and shall bring thee tidings of my life or death, believe thou whatever he shall tell thee." And then he added, "May the Lord bless thee, my own sweetest little Elizabeth, my heart's own loved sister, my precious treasure,—may our dear Lord keep up thine heart and thy courage; may He bless the babe which thou bearest in thy bosom! We will do with it what we have promised Him. Farewell! Remember our wedded life and our true and holy love; never forget me in any of thy prayers. Farewell! I may stay no longer!"—and he departed.

Elizabeth gazed after him in silent anguish, straining her eyes to catch the last glimpse of that beloved form, which her heart sadly foreboded she should see no more on earth; and then retraced her melancholy way to her desolate home. She there laid aside her royal robes to assume the widow's dress, to which she was so soon to acquire a mournful right.

The bitter parting once over, the spirit of the devoted Crusader and adventurous knight rose with the joy of a noble heart in conflict and sacrifice. He was leading a goodly company to the rescue of the sepulchre of Christ. Among his own vassalage were five counts, and a numerous train of barons, knights, and esquires. Five priests, among whom was Berthold, his chaplain and chronicler, accompanied the

army to administer to its spiritual wants. Besides his own vassals, the Landgrave, as Commander-in-Chief of the Crusaders of Central Germany, was followed by a train of knights from Suabia, Franconia, and the banks of the Rhine.

This gallant army joined the Emperor in Apulia about the end of August. Scarcely, however, had the Crusaders embarked for Palestine, when a fatal fever broke out among them, to which the young Landgrave of Thuringia was one of the first to fall a victim. He received the last sacraments from the hands of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and died in a spirit of loving resignation worthy of a true soldier of Christ. Not a shadow of regret seemed to cross his mind at dying thus far from home, and friends, and children; from the subjects to whom he had been so just and gracious a prince; and from the wife whom he loved with so single and devoted an affection; dying, also, without a sight of the sepulchre of Christ, and without having been allowed to strike a blow for its deliverance.

It was enough for him to die under the banner of Christ;—he had lived for God and in God, and he was well content to die at the moment and at the post assigned by Him.

Louis charged some of his knights to return home to bear his ring and the tidings of his death to his Elizabeth; and he besought those around him, in the name of God and our Lady, to remember him if they should

survive their holy enterprize, to carry back his bones to Thuringia, and bury them at Reynhartsbrun, and never to forget him in their prayers. A few minutes before he died he saw a number of white doves hovering over his head, and exclaimed, "See! see! these snow-white doves!" They thought he was delirious. A moment afterwards he said, "I must go with those beautiful doves." With these words on his lips, he fell asleep in the Lord, and the eyes of his chaplain, Berthold, were opened to behold the doves of which he spoke, on their flight towards the East, bearing with them, doubtless, to the Sun of Eternal Justice, that young soul which had preserved throughout its mortal pilgrimage a whiteness and innocence like their's. Deep and true was the mourning of his companions in arms. "Alas!" cried they, "dear lord! good knight! why have you left us thus, exiles on a foreign land? Woe to us! for we have lost the light of our eyes, the leader of our pilgrimage, the hope of our return!" They solemnly swore to fulfil their lord's last commands in the event of their surviving the crusade, and then went on their way to accomplish their war.

The knights charged with the sad office of bearing to Thuringia the tidings of the Landgrave's death, had a long and heavy journey to make, and did not arrive there till the beginning of winter. Elizabeth had just given birth to her fourth child, Gertrude, and was unable to see the messengers when they arrived;—

they therefore unfolded their sad tidings to the Landgravine Sophia, and the two young princes, Henry and Conrad. The first thought of all, after the first burst of grief was over, was for the young widow, to whom, in her state of weakness, the announcement of her bereavement might, it was feared, be fatal. The Landgravine Sophia, whose heart now warmed to one whom her son had so tenderly loved, gave the strictest orders that Elizabeth should be kept in ignorance of the truth till she should recover sufficient strength to bear it; and then she took upon herself the painful task of making it known to her. She went to her daughter's room as if only to pay her a visit of affection on her recovery. Elizabeth, wholly unsuspicious of the object of her coming, received her with respect and affection, and making her sit by the couch on which she was lying, began to converse cheerfully with her. At last the mother, making a great effort to overcome her emotion, said: "Take courage, my dearest child, and be not cast down by what has befallen my son, your husband, by the will of God, to which, as you know, he has always been perfectly resigned." Elizabeth, seeing that her mother-in-law spoke these words calmly, and without shedding a tear, never suspected the extent of her misfortune, but, supposing that her husband had been taken prisoner, replied: "If my brother has been made prisoner, by the help of God and our friends he shall soon be ransomed. My father, I am sure, will

come to our assistance, and we shall all be happy again." But the Landgravine answered, "Oh! my dear child, be patient, and take this ring which he has sent you; for to our great sorrow he is dead!" "Oh, mother!" said Elizabeth, "what is it you say?" "He is dead," mournfully repeated the unhappy mother. "Oh, my God! my God!" cried Elizabeth, in a choking voice, turning first pale, then red, and letting her hands fall helplessly on her lap, "then is the whole world dead to me—the world and all its joys."

Her brain seemed to have been turned by the sudden anguish which had fallen upon her, for she began to run wildly through the halls and corridors of the castle, crying, "He is dead-dead!" She never stopped till she came against the wall of the refectory, to which she clung, bathed in tears. Here the Landgravine and some of her ladies found her: they made her sit down, and tried to console her; but she only wept, and sobbed out these broken words: "Now," she repeated incessantly, "I have lost everything. Oh! my heart's own dearest brother! oh, my good and pious husband! thou art then dead, and hast left me in misery! How shall I ever learn to live without thee? Oh! poor forsaken widow! unhappy woman that I am! May He who forsakes not the widow and the orphan, comfort me. Oh, my Jesus! strengthen me in my weakness!"

CHAPTER VI.

Elizabeth is driven from Wartburg.—Ingratitude of the people of Eisenach.—She is comforted by our Divine Lord and His Blessed Mother.

And she was strengthened. The blow which threatened to crush her utterly brought healing with it; the bond, which, blessed as it was, had bound her to earth, was broken, and her freed spirit mounted steadily towards heaven through regions of such entire self-annihilation, such absolute disengagement from all earthly consolation and all human sympathy, that we can only gaze at them from afar. The air of those heights is too intensely pure to be breathed by any but those whom our Lord has made meet by suffering here to stand at once, without passing through the fire, before the glory of His presence.

One by one was every stay removed which could afford any solace to her lonely widowhood;—without one repining thought she let them go one by one, as our Lord called for them; and at last, as if she now understood what He wanted of her, she brought Him, of her own accord, the last precious things still treasured in her heart—her beloved children, and gave

them up to Him, that so she might have no love but His.

After the first burst of natural sympathy had subsided, which was called forth by the desolate position of the widow of twenty, old jealousies and prejudices began to revive in the court. Evil tongues whispered to the young Landgrave, Henry, that he would be a far better ruler of his father's dominions than the infant heir of his brother, and that it behoved him at once to seize the sovereign authority, and expel his fanatical sister-in-law and her children from the country. His younger brother, Conrad, was carried away by the same evil counsels, and, armed with their joint authority, the base courtiers hastened to Elizabeth, whom they found in the apartments of her mother-in-law; and after reproaching her most cruelly with having deceived her husband and squandered his revenues, they bade her, as a punishment for her misdeeds, to withdraw at once from the castle. begged humbly for a little delay, and the Landgravine Sophia, shocked at the cruelty of her sons, flung her arms around her, crying, "She shall stay with me! No one shall force her from me! Where are my sons? I must speak to them." But the messengers were inflexible; -so, finding all resistance vain, she could only accompany her daughter to the castle gate. The dethroned sovereign was forbidden to carry anything whatever with her; but in the court-yard she found her children waiting for her, with two of her ladies of honour, from whose narrative we learn the details of these days of suffering.

The castle gates closed behind her, and strange to tell, not a hand, or a voice, save that of her mother-inlaw, was raised in her defence. The best and bravest of the Thuringian chivalry had indeed followed their lord to Palestine, yet it seems scarcely credible that not one lance was left behind for the defence of the widow and the orphans of their brave Landgrave. Not less amazing was the base ingratitude of the inhabitants of Eisenach. The Landgrave Henry had issued a proclamation forbidding any one, on pain of his severest displeasure, to give food or shelter to his sister-in-law and her children. To the shame of humanity he was obeyed. The exiled princess went from house to house, knocking at the doors of those whom she had visited in their afflictions, and fed in their hunger-not one was opened to her. At last she found shelter in a miserable little inn, the owner of which could not, or would not, turn her from the doors; for, as she said, an inn was open to her as to all the world.

"They have taken from me all that I had," said she, weeping: "I have nothing left me now but to pray to God."

The host assigned for the resting-place of herself and her children a kind of out-house, in which he usually kept his pigs. He drove them out to make room for the Landgravine of Thuringia, the royal princess of Hungary; but, as if this last degree of humiliation had suddenly restored peace to her soul, she had no sooner entered the vile resting-place assigned her, than a supernatural joy seemed to penetrate her whole being. She remained thus till midnight, when she heard the bell of the Franciscan church hard by, which she had founded during her husband's lifetime, ring for matins.

She went thither to assist at the office, and when it was concluded, she begged the friars to entone the *Te Deum*, in thanksgiving for the great troubles which God had been pleased to send her.

Prostrate at the foot of the altar while that wonderful hymn went up to heaven, the peace of God, the joy of suffering, the love of poverty, filled her heart to overflowing, never to leave it more.

She gave thanks aloud to Him who had been pleased to give her a share in the poverty of His own crib at Bethlehem. "O Lord," said she, "Thy holy will be done. Yesterday I was a Landgravine, with houses and castles many: to-day I am a beggar woman, to whom no one will give a night's lodging. Lord, if I had served Thee better in my sovereign estate, and had done greater alms for Thy love, my heart would rejoice thereat this day; but alas! it has not been so."

But while the saint rejoiced in her own sufferings, the mother's heart was not proof against those of her children. She heard them crying with cold and hunger. "My God," said she, "I have deserved to see them suffer thus, and I repent me truly for my sins. My children were born princes and princesses, and now they are lying hungry on this straw. This breaks my heart. As to myself, Thou knowest, O God, that I am unworthy to have been chosen by Thee to the grace of poverty."

She spent the rest of that night and a part of the following day in the church; but the intensity of her children's suffering from cold and hunger drove her again into the streets of Eisenach, to appeal in vain to the charity of those whom she had fed and clothed, and provided with every comfort. At last a poor priest ventured to brave the Landgrave's anger, and offered her a share of his humble dwelling; but she was not suffered to rest there. An order was sent to her from the court to remove to the castle of one of the nobles. who had always shewn the greatest enmity towards her. This wretched man shut her up with her whole family in a miserable hole, where they were left to pass the night without food or fire. When the morning came, the Saint left this inhospitable roof, saying as she departed, "Poor walls! I thank you for having sheltered us this night to the best of your power from the rain and the wind. I would fain from my heart thank your master also, but in truth I know not for what." She went back to her old lodging at the inn,

and passed the greater part of the day, and even of the night, in the churches. "No one," said she, "dares drive me hence, for these belong to God." In the extremity of her distress, she determined to send her children from her, that they might no longer share it, and that she might not be tempted to sin by witnessing their sufferings; "for," says a centemporary historian, "she loved her children to excess." So the poor little ones were taken away by some unknown friend and concealed separately in various places of safety.

Now that "the dear Saint's" heart was eased from anxiety about them, her own sufferings seemed easy to bear. Having pledged all the valuables which she had about her, she gained her poor livelihood by spinning, and contrived even now to save something to give to those whose poverty was greater than her own.

But neither her tender charity nor her heroic patience seems to have had the smallest effect upon the iron hearts of the people of Eisenach. Not a single trait of gratitude or compassion has come down to us to relieve the dark picture of their baseness. Some even went so far as to mock and insult their benefactress.

An old beggar woman, who had long been the object of the Saint's unwearied care, met her one day begging her own bread in the streets of Eisenach. They came at the same moment to a stream of muddy water—still pointed out as the scene of one of "the dear Saint's"

sufferings. It was crossed by means of a few stepping stones. Instead of allowing the princess to pass, the old woman rudely pushed against her, and cried out as she fell into the noisome stream,—"Well done! you would not live like a Landgravine when you were one, so now you may lie there in the mud for me, for I am not going to help you up." Elizabeth arose as well as she could, with her wonted patience and meekness, and said, laughing at her own fall and the mud with which she was covered, "This is for the gold and jewels I used to wear:" and then, as her historian tells us, "she went, full of resignation and unmingled joy, to wash her soiled garments in a stream hard by, and her patient soul in the blood of the Lamb."

But though all men forsook her, the Lord forsook her not. In this period of her extreme desolation, He vouchsafed to her the most abundant revelations of his love. Ysentrude, the most beloved of her companions, who was with her through all this dreary time, saw her often in ecstasy.

On Christmas-day she was thus rapt during mass. On her return to her miserable dwelling, after a slight collation, she sat down on a window-seat and rested her weary head on the bosom of her beloved companion. Ysentrude thought that she was ill and wished to sleep, but she soon saw her face kindle, and a heavenly smile play on her lips. Presently it was succeeded by a flood of tears, and these again by an angelic expression

of joy; and so, in these alternations of supernatural joy and sorrow, she passed the time till compline, her head still resting on the heart of her friend. Towards the end of this silent ecstasy she exclaimed: "Yes, Lord, assuredly if Thou wilt stay with me, I will stay with Thee, and will never be parted from Thee." When she came to herself, Ysentrude implored her to tell her the meaning of these words, and what she had seen in her ecstasy.

Elizabeth was loth to tell her secret from humility, but at last yielded to the entreaties of her faithful friend. "I have seen heaven opened," said she, "and my Lord, the most merciful Jesus, has been pleased to abase himself to me, and to console me for all my sorrows. He spoke to me with ineffable sweetness. calling me His sister, and His friend. He shewed me His most Holy Mother, and also His beloved apostle St. John, who was with Him. At the sight of my Divine Saviour I was full of joy, and when He turned away as if to leave me, I wept, because I deserved not that He should stay with me. Then turning upon me His compassionate eyes, He said: "Elizabeth, if thou wilt stay with me, I will surely stay with thee, and never be separated from thee." And immediately I replied, "Yes, yes, Lord; I will stay with Thee, and never be separated from Thee, whether in weal or woe."

And from that moment these divine words were engraven on her heart in characters of fire.

On another occasion, when she had received some affront of so cruel a nature as to ruffle the wonted patience of her spirit, she sought relief in fervent prayer for her persecutors, and besought our Lord, with many tears, to bestow a favour upon them for every one of the insults which they had heaped on her. As she wearied herself with the fervour of her prayer, a voice replied: "Thou hast never offered any petition to me so acceptable as this: it has pierced to the bottom of my heart;—therefore do I pardon all the sins which thou hast committed throughout the whole course of thy life." And then the voice went on to enumerate all the sins she had ever committed, saying: "I forgive thee this sin and that." Elizabeth exclaimed in amazement, "Who art thou who speakest thus to me?" And the voice answered, "Even He at whose feet Mary Magdalen knelt in the house of Simon, the leper." Afterwards, as the Saint was deploring the loss of her usual confessor, our Lord appeared to her and assigned her St. John the Evangelist,-to whom from infancy she had been devoted,—as her confessor; and to him she made her confession with a joy and consolation she had never before experienced in the tribunal of penance.

The most minute details of our Lord's sufferings were made known to her. Once, as she was in prayer, a hand was suddenly opened before her, which she knew by the scar in the middle to be that of the Son of

God. It was of a dazzling whiteness, but extremely thin, and the fingers very long and slender. The well known voice told her the cause of this extreme thinness: "I was exhausted by nightly prayer and vigil, and by my daily toilsome journeys through city and country to preach the kingdom of God."

The tender heart of Elizabeth was wrung with anguish when these visions brought before her the thought that her sins had inflicted all these sufferings upon that Divine Victim, but He bade her be comforted. "Grieve not thyself, dearest child," said He, "for all thy sins are forgiven thee." Know that I have been punished for them in every member of the body, in every faculty of the soul, whereby thou canst ever have offended thy Creator; know that thou art thereby made pure from all sin." "If it be so," replied Elizabeth, "why can I not cease to offend Thee?" "I have not sanctified thee," said our Lord, "to such a degree as to make thee incapable of sin, but I have given thee grace so to love Me that thou would'st rather die than commit it."

Not content with these gracious communications of His love, our Lord placed His suffering child under the special care of His Mother, who vouchsafed to converse with her with the most loving familiarity. As the forlorn exile was meditating one day on the flight into Egypt,—a fruitful theme of contemplation for the outcast and deserted,—she inwardly wished that some holy monk would come and unfold to her all the deep meaning of that mystery.

Immediately our Blessed Mother was at her side. "If thou wilt be my pupil," said she, "I will be thy mistress; and if thou wilt be my servant, I will be thy lady."

Elizabeth replied in joyful awe—"Who are you, who claim me for pupil and servant?" "I am the Mother of the living God," said Mary; "and I tell thee that no monk can instruct thee better than I." At these words Elizabeth clasped her hands together, and stretched them out in token of homage towards the Mother of Mercy, who took them between her own and said: "If thou wilt be my child I will be thy Mother; and when thou art well instructed and obedient, as a good pupil, a faithful servant, and a devoted daughter, I will give thee back into the hands of my son. Shun all discussions; shut thine ears to all the evil that is said of thee; and remember that my son was forced to fly into Egypt to escape the snares of Herod."

Another time, as Elizabeth was weeping bitterly that she so imperfectly fulfilled the precepts of her heavenly Mother and mistress, the consoler of the afflicted stood again suddenly by her side.

"My child," said she, "why this vehement distress?

I did not adopt thee for my daughter in order to do
thee harm. Be not discouraged because thou hast not

fully observed my precepts. I knew well beforehand that thou would'st surely fail therein. Say my salutation once, and this offence shall be forgiven thee."

One night, as Elizabeth was reciting the Ave Maria, she who was thus invoked appeared to her and said: "I will teach thee all the prayers which I was accustomed to say when I was in the temple. I asked of God, in the first place, to give me grace to love Him, and to hate my enemies. There is no virtue without this absolute love of God, by which the plenitude of grace is infused into the soul; yet it will not remain there, but will flow away like water, unless the soul hates its enemies—that is, its vices and sins. Let him, then, who would preserve grace from on high, learn to reconcile this love with this hatred within his heart. I would have thee do all that I did myself. I used to rise at midnight and prostrate myself before the altar, where I asked grace of God to observe all the precepts of His law, and I besought Him to grant me all the graces needful to render me pleasing in His sight. I prayed especially that I might live to see that most holy Virgin who was to bring forth His Son, that I might consecrate my whole being to serve and venerate her." Elizabeth interrupted her by the exclamation-"O most sweet lady, were you not already full of grace and of all virtues?" But the holy Virgin answered, "Be well assured that I believed myself to be as guilty and miserable as thou thinkest

thyself to be, and therefore I prayed earnestly to God to grant me His grace."

"The Lord," added the most holy Virgin, "like a skilful musician, who attunes the strings of his harp to perfect harmony, had ordered and regulated my heart, my spirit, my soul, and all my senses, according to His own good pleasure. I was often carried by angels into the bosom of God, and then I tasted such joy, sweetness, and consolation, that I lost all memory of the world below; and I was so familiar with God and the holy angels, that it seemed to me as if I had always dwelt in that glorious company. Then, when it pleased God the Father, the angels brought me back to the place where I had been praying. When I found myself again on earth, and remembered where I had been, that memory so inflamed me with the love of God, that I embraced the stones, the trees, and all created things, for the love of their Creator. I wished to be the servant of all the holy women who dwelt in the temple, and I desired to be subject to all creatures, for love of the supreme Father of all: and thus it befell me often. And so should'st thou do also, but thou art ever disputing, and saying, Why are such favours bestowed upon me when I am unworthy to receive them ?- and then thou fallest into a kind of despair, and believest not in the mercies of God. Take heed that thou speak thus no more, for this greatly displeaseth God. He can give, as a good Master, His

blessings to whom He will; and as a wise Father, He knows on whom to bestow them."

Some time afterwards, as Elizabeth was praying fervently, her tender mother again appeared to her. "My child," said she, apparently in answer to a difficulty which has occurred to most of us when meditating on the marvellous perfections of the Mother of God, "do not imagine that I received all these graces without any trouble on my part. I declare to thee that I never received a single grace from God without much labour, continual prayer, ardent desires, deep devotion, many trials, and many tears. Rest assured that no grace ever descends upon the soul except by means of prayer and corporal mortification. When we have given to God what we can of ourselves, however little it may be, He comes Himself into our soul, bringing with Him those supreme gifts which render it insensible and forgetful of all that it has ever done to please God. We thus become more than ever contemptible in our own sight. What should we do then? Give thanks devoutly to God for all these favours. When He sees the soul to be thus humble and thankful, He makes it promises which far exceed all its secret desires. It was thus that He dealt with me when He sent me His archangel, Gabriel. And what did I then? I knelt down and joined my hands together, saying: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to His word. And then

God gave me His Son, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Knowest thou wherefore? Because I believed in Him, and humbled myself before Him. I tell thee these things, my daughter, because I wish to cure thee of thy want of faith and hope. When the Lord has made thee any promise, say like me,—Ecce ancilla Domini, and abide in the firm faith and expectation of that promise until it be fulfilled; and if it be not fulfilled, say to thyself that thou hast committed some offence against God by which thou hast hindered its accomplishment."

On Christmas-eve, as Elizabeth was asking the Lord to give her grace to love Him with all her heart, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her again, and asked her,— "Who is there that loves God? Dost thou love Him?" Elizabeth feared to say "Yes," and could not say "No." While she was hesitating what to answer, Mary continued: "Shall I tell you who have loved Him? The blessed Bartholomew loved Him; the blessed John, and the blessed Laurence loved Him. Would'st thou be burnt or flayed alive for Him, like them?" Elizabeth was still silent, and Mary went on: "I tell thee of a truth, that if thou will consent to be stripped of all things that are dear and precious to thee, and even of thine own will, I will obtain for thee the same merit as Bartholomew, when he was stripped of his skin. If thou wilt bear injuries patiently, thou shall have the merit of Laurence when he was burned. If thou make no reply to insults and reproaches, thou shall have the same merit as John, when his enemies sought to poison him; and in all this I will be with thee to aid and strengthen thee."

These blessed conversations were concluded by a glorious vision of the Assumption, in which Elizabeth saw her heavenly Mother and Teacher rise from a tomb fragrant with flowers, and ascend amidst a host of glorious angels to the arms of her Divine Son.

CHAPTER VII.

The Saint's residence at Kitzingen and Bamberg.—Return of the Crusaders with the body of the Landgrave.—Elizabeth returns under their protection to Wartburg.

The Landgravine Sophia, finding that she could do nothing to protect her daughter-in-law in Thuringia, sent secret information of her desolate position to her aunt Matilda, the abbess of Kitzingen, and sister of her mother, the queen of Hungary, who immediately sent trusty messengers to bring her niece and her children to the abbey. Elizabeth gladly accepted an offer which gave her the welcome shelter of a religious house, and also enabled her once more to enjoy the

company of her children; and, crossing the vast forests and mountains which divide Thuringia from Franconia, she arrived in safety at Kitzingen, on the Maine, where she was received by the good abbess with maternal affection. She remained for some time in this peaceful shelter, finding her chief consolation in following, as nearly as possible, the rule of the religious with whom she dwelt. Meanwhile, her maternal uncle, Egbert, Prince Bishop of Bamberg, having heard of her misfortunes, and of her present residence at Kitzingen, sent to invite her to Bamberg, as a more fitting home than a cloister for her and her children. She obeyed, perhaps somewhat reluctantly; and leaving her second daughter, now only two years old-who afterwards took the veil in the same convent-under the care of her aunt, she set off with her other children for Bamberg, where she was received by the Bishop with every mark of kindness and consideration. He offered to send her to her father in Hungary, but she declined the proposal; and her uncle then assigned her the castle of Botenstein as her residence, with a household suited to her rank. Thither she repaired with her children and her faithful attendants, Ysentrude and Guta, and resumed her habitual exercises of penance and prayer. The Bishop, thinking that her youth and remarkable beauty, as well as her unprotected position, made a second marriage desirable for her, did all in his power to induce her to consent to a union with the Emperor

Frederick, who had just lost his second wife, Yolanda of Jerusalem. This haughty and sacrilegious prince had, it seems, set his heart upon marrying the saintly widow of the good Landgrave,—as at another time he was bent upon a union with the beloved daughter of St. Clare, the holy Agnes of Bohemia. The Prince Bishop of Bamberg, either dazzled by the imperial suitor's rank, or deceived by his well-known duplicity, urged Elizabeth to accept a hand so mighty to protect both her and her children.

"My lord," replied she, "I had once for my lord a husband who loved me tenderly, and who was ever my true and faithful friend: I had a share in his honours and his power. I have had much of the splendour, and riches, and joys of this world. I have had all this; but I have always thought, what you, my lord Bishop, know well-that the joys of this world are nothing worth; -therefore do I desire to leave the world, and to pay to God what I owe Him-even the debts of my soul. You know well that all the enjoyments of the world lead to nothing but grief and torment, and the death of the soul. My lord, I long exceedingly to be with our Lord, and I have but one thing on earth to ask of Him. I have two children* of my lord with me, who will be both rich and powerful: I should be very glad and grateful to our God if

^{*} The two not destined to the cloister—her eldest son and daughter.

He would show me so much love as to call them both to Himself."

It does not appear that Elizabeth pleaded with the Bishop the vow of chastity which she had made during her husband's lifetime, in case of his decease, but she spoke of it often to Guta and Ysentrude. "I have sworn," said she, "to God, and to my lord and husband, when he was alive, that I would never belong to any other man but him. God, who reads the heart and discovers its most secret thoughts, knows that I made this vow with a simple and pure heart, and in perfect good faith. I trust in His mercy, for it is impossible but that He will defend my chastity against all the devices of men, and even, if need be, against all their violence. It was no conditional vow, subject to the good pleasure of my parents and friends; but a vow, free, spontaneous, and unconditional, to consecrate myself after the death of my well-beloved, wholly and entirely to the glory of my Creator. If they dare, in contempt of the liberty of marriage, to give me to any man whatsoever, I will protest before the altar; and if I can find no other way of escape, I will cut off my nose with my own hand, in order to become an object of horror to all men."

The determined will of the Bishop on this subject filled her heart with no little anxiety; but she had recourse to her never-failing refuge—the mercy of Jesus and the intercession of Mary; and from both she received assurances of protection which silenced her fears.

And now she was summoned by her uncle to Bamberg, to receive the mortal remains of that beloved husband to whose memory she had given such proof of fidelity.

The companions of Louis had left his body at Otranto, and gone on to Syria to accomplish their vow. Some few of them reached Jerusalem, and offered gifts and prayers for his intention at the sepulchre of Christ. On their return they stopped at Otranto, and from that place they carried the bones of their beloved sovereign with royal and religious solemnity till they reached the cathedral of Bamberg, where the bodies of St. Henry and St. Cunigunde reposed. There the office of the dead was solemnly chanted in the presence of all the nobles, clergy, and religious of the neighbourhood.

On the following day Elizabeth arrived, with her faithful Guta and Ysentrude. The coffin was opened, and at the sight of the whitened bones of him who had left her full of life and love, the pent-up anguish of the widow's heart flowed forth afresh. The bystanders, deeply affected themselves, tried in vain to soothe her. But her thoughts soon turned of themselves to God, and she was calm again. "I thank Thee, O Lord," said she, aloud, "that Thou hast deigned to hear the prayer of Thy servant, and to grant my intense desire to look upon the remains of my beloved, who was also

Thine. I give Thee thanks for having thus mercifully consoled my afflicted and desolate heart. He offered himself, and I also offered him, for the defence of Thy holy land, and I repent me not of the sacrifice, although I loved him with all the strength of my heart. Thou knowest, O my God, how I loved this husband, who so truly loved Thee ;- Thou knowest that if it had been Thy holy will to leave him to me, I would have preferred his beloved presence a thousand times to all the joys of this world :- Thou knowest that if Thou hadst permitted it, I would joyfully have spent my life in misery with him, and have begged my bread with him from door to door all over the wide world, only for the happiness of being with him! Now I abandon him and myself wholly to Thy will, and I would not, if I could, buy back his precious life at the price of one single hair of my head, unless it were Thy will, O my God."

This was the last cry of vanquished nature, the last sigh of earthly affection expiring in that young heart of twenty, under the overmastering power of the love of God.

The Prince Bishop seems to have spoken no more of the imperial bridegroom.

Elizabeth calmly left the church, and seating herself in a little enclosed garden adjoining the cathedral, she sent to beg the Thuringian nobles who had brought back her husband's body, to come and speak with her. She rose at their approach, and begged them to sit down beside her, as she did not feel strong enough to remain standing. She then—but with great sweetness and charity—told them the history of her wrongs, and besought them, in the name of God, to defend and protect her children. The Bishop came in his turn to confirm his niece's statement, and entered into the sad and shameful details of the persecution which she and her innocent children had endured.

There was a burst of noble indignation from that knightly band, as, with flashing eyes and hand on sword, they listened to the simple tale of their royal and saintly mistress, and the calm and dignified appeal of the Prince Bishop to their faith and loyalty. They declared with one voice that they acknowledged the widow of their deceased lord as their liege lady and mistress, and were ready to defend her to the death. The noble Rodolph of Varila, in the name of his companions-in-arms, besought the Bishop to entrust his niece and her children to their faithful guardianship.

He consented; and after having celebrated a pontifical mass for the dead, sent them away with his blessing.

Slowly and sadly the mournful procession moved on to the abbey of Reinhartsbrunn, which the good Landgrave had chosen for his burial-place. The news of its approach soon spread far and wide through the land; and from the farthest ends of his dominions, high and low, rich and poor, noble and serf, bishop, priest, and monk, poured forth to do him honour. The funeral rites were celebrated in the abbey church, in presence of the mother, the wife, and the children of Louis, and of the two young princes, Henry and Conrad, now forced to meet their injured sister-in-law in the calm, still presence of the dead. Many miracles were wrought at the tomb of the good Landgrave, who was popularly honoured as a saint, though the church has never set her seal to the devotion.

After the funeral ceremonies were over, the Lord of Varila and his companions-in-arms consulted together as to the course to be pursued in order to reinstate their lady in her rights. "We must now," said Rodolph, "keep the faith which we have sworn to our noble prince and our lady Elizabeth, who has already endured so many miseries, or I fear me, we shall rue it in the eternal fire of hell."

It was agreed that four of the knights, headed by Rodolph of Varila, should ask an audience of the two princes, and remonstrate with them on their treatment of their brother's widow and orphans.

As spokesman of the party, Varila thus addressed the Landgrave Henry. "My lord, your friends and vassals, who are here present, have prayed me to speak to you in their name. We have heard things of you in Franconia, and here also in Thuringia, so grievous that we have been utterly confounded, and blush to think that in our country, and among our princes, such

impiety, infidelity, and forgetfulness of honour should be found. What have you done, young prince?—and who have been your counsellors? You have ignominiously driven from your castles and your cities the wife of your brother—the poor desolate widow—the daughter of an illustrious monarch, whom you were bound, on the contrary, to comfort and honour, as if she had been some vile abandoned woman. To the slander of your own princely honour, you have exposed her to misery, and left her to wander like a beggar in the streets. While your brother was giving his life for the love of God, his little orphans, whom you were bound to defend and support as a faithful guardian, have been cruelly driven from you, and even forced to part from their mother, lest they should perish for hunger with her. Is this your brotherly love? Is this what you have learned from that virtuous prince, your brother, who would not thus have dealt with the lowest of his subjects? No! the rudest peasant would not have treated his fellow as you, prince, have treated your brother, while he was gone to die for the love of How can we trust hereafter to your faith and honour? You know well, that by your knighthood you are bound to protect the widow and the orphan, yet you outrage the widow and orphans of your brother. I tell you plainly that this cries to God for vengeance!"

The Landgravine Sophia burst into tears at this address; the young prince hung down his head and

answered nothing. "My lord," continued the brave speaker, "what have you to fear from a poor lone woman, sick, sad, and solitary, without friend or ally in this country? What harm would that holy and virtuous lady have done you, had she remained mistress of all your castles? What will be said of us now in other lands? I blush to think of it. Oh, shame! shame! You have dishonoured the whole country of Thuringia; you have stained your own reputation and that of your princely house; and verily I fear that the wrath of God will fall heavily upon this land, unless you do penance before Him, seek reconciliation with this noble lady, and restore to the son of your brother the inheritance which you have wrested from him?"

God made use of the bold words of the noble knight to melt a heart too young to be utterly hardened. Henry burst into tears, and, after weeping for a long time in silence, he said: "I repent sincerely for what I have done. I will never again listen to those by whose advice I have thus acted; give me back your confidence and friendship, I will do willingly whatever my sister Elizabeth shall require of me. I give you full power to dispose of my life and my goods for this purpose." The Lord of Varila replied: "It is well! it is the only way to avert the anger of God." Henry could not, however, help adding, in a low voice: "If my sister Elizabeth had the whole empire of Germany for her

own, she would keep none of it; for she would give it all away for the love of God."

Rodolph went immediately to make known the result of his remonstrance to Elizabeth. When he began to speak of the conditions to be imposed upon the Landgrave Henry, she exclaimed, "I want none of his cities, or castles, or lands, or anything which can distract me; but I shall be very grateful to my brother-in-law if he will give me, out of my dowry, wherewithal to provide for the expenses I desire to incur for the soul of my well-beloved and my own." The knights then went in search of Henry, who came accompanied by his mother and brother. He besought Elizabeth to forgive him, assuring her that he felt the deepest remorse for his conduct. Sophia and Conrad joined their entreaties to his. Elizabeth's only reply was to cast herself into her brother's arms and weep.

The rights of her children were also secured. Herman, the eldest, was acknowledged as the lawful heir of Hesse and Thuringia, the regency during his minority remaining in the hands of his uncle Henry.

The crusaders then returned to their homes, and Elizabeth and her children to Wartburg.

CHAPTER VIII.

Elizabeth removes to Marburg.—She takes the three vows of religion.

THE Landgrave Henry kept his word, and did all in his power to wipe out the memory of his past cruelty. He treated Elizabeth with all the respect and affection due to her, and left her at full liberty to exercise the works of charity in which she delighted.

She received about this time the great consolation of a fatherly letter of encouragement from the Supreme Pontiff, Gregory VII., who, as Cardinal Ugolini, had specially commended her to the glorious St. Francis. He assured her now that he took her and her children into his special care, and again commissioned Master Conrad, his representative in Germany, to undertake the care of her soul, and also to be her protector against all her enemies and persecutors.

And now Elizabeth felt that she was free to embrace the religious state to which, from the first moment of her widowhood, she had aspired. She was already a child of St. Francis, and she longed to follow his rule in its utmost severity, and to beg her bread from door to door; but her director sternly forbade her to embrace a way of life which he judged to be unfitted for her age and sex.

She then besought her brother-in-law to assign her

some place of residence, where she might live undisturbed, to herself and to God. Henry ceded to her the city of Marburg, in Hesse, with all its dependencies and revenues, in full possession, for the maintenance of herself and her household, and 500 marks of silver to defray the expenses of her first establishment there.

Elizabeth gratefully thanked her brother for a bounty far beyond her wishes or expectations, and a year having now elapsed since her return to Wartburg, she set off with her spiritual guide to the city which her sanctity was to render so illustrious. To avoid the clamourous homage of the citizens, who came in crowds to do homage to their young sovereign, she retired to a village called Wehrda, a few miles from Marburg, where she chose a deserted cabin as her abode, until her residence at Marburg should be ready for her. This was to be a little cottage of mud and wood, like the huts of the neighbouring peasants, built close to the Church of the Friars Minor. She wished to make it plain to all that she came, not as a wealthy princess to establish herself in her capital, but as a simple and patient widow, to serve the Lord in all humility. soon as her home was prepared for her, she took possession of it with her children and her faithful attendants.

And now, as her confessor persisted in his refusal to allow her to embrace the Franciscan rule in all its strictness, or to enrol herself among the daughters of St. Clare, she desired at least to approach the perfection of their life as nearly as obedience permitted. She obtained leave therefore to make the three solemn vows of religion as a member of the third order of St. Francis. She is thus accounted the first religious and patroness of the nuns of that order, although it was not till a later period that it assumed a strictly monastic character, by the general adoption of enclosure and of the three vows of religion.

Notwithstanding her vow of poverty, Master Conrad compelled her to keep in her own hands the administration of the revenues granted her by the Regent, which, after paying certain debts of her husband, she was to devote to the relief of the poor.

For many days before her profession, Elizabeth was engaged in fervent prayer for the graces needful in her new state. She told her friend Ysentrude that she prayed continually for three graces: first, an absolute contempt for all earthly things; next, courage to despise the insults and calumnies of men; and, last and chiefly, the diminution of the excessive love which she bore to her children. One day she came to her companions radiant with a joy which is not of this world, and said, "The Lord has heard my prayer, for behold all the things of this world, which I once loved, are become like dust in my eyes. As to the calumnies of men, the lies of the wicked, and the contempt which I excite, they make me feel proud and happy. My dear little

ones—the children of my bosom, whom I loved so much, whom I was wont to embrace so tenderly—even these beloved children are, I take God to witness, no more than strangers to me. To God I offer them; to Him I entrust them. May His holy will be done in all things. I love nothing now; I love no creature any longer; I love nothing but my Creator."

Such was the heroic detachment from all earthly ties, by which the saint prepared herself to assume the habit consecrated by the use of St. Francis and St. Clare. "If I could find a habit," said she, "poorer than St. Clare's, I would take it to console myself for not being able to enter her holy order; but I know of none."

On Good Friday, when the altars are laid bare in memory of Him who was stripped of all things for the love of us, and in the Church of the Friars Minor—the most perfect imitators of the poverty of Christ—Elizabeth laid her pure hands upon the naked altar-stone, and swore to renounce for ever her own will, her friends, kindred, children, and all the pomps and pleasures of this world. While Master Conrad said the mass, Brother Burchhard, the Provincial of the Friars Minor in Hesse, cut off her hair, clothed her in a grey tunic, and girded her with the cord, which is the distinctive mark of the Order of St. Francis. She wore this habit till the day of her death, and always went barefoot.

Guta, her maid of honour, took the habit of the third order at the same time with her beloved mistress, and solemnly renewed the vow of chastity which she had made privately in the lifetime of the good landgrave.

"The dear Saint" now made her last sacrifice of human affection, by sending from her the children to whom she had clung with such intense love. The two elder, whose lot was cast in the world, Herman and Sophia, were sent to the Castle of Creutzburg, to remain under sure guardianship until the one should be of age to assume the government of his dominions. the other to be given in marriage to her betrothed, the young Duke of Brabant. The second daughter returned to her aunt, the Abbess of Kitzingen, and the little Gertrude, who had been devoted to God before her birth in the parting anguish of her father and mother, was sent to the convent of Aldenburg, a poor but holy house, of which she was elected abbess at twenty-one, after a noviciate marked by every monastic virtue.

Elizabeth was now left alone with God, to lead the life of poverty and abnegation which she had chosen for herself. As she was forbidden to beg her bread, she resolved to earn it by the labour of her hands. She employed herself in spinning wool (she was not skilful enough to spin flax), and sold the produce of her labour for a poor pittance to the nuns of Aldenburg. When confined to her bed by sickness, she employed herself

in preparing the wool for spinning. She saved from the produce of her labour enough to make some poor offerings to the Church; the rest supplied her own coarse and scanty nourishment. The whole of her princely revenues were devoted to the poor, to whom she still rendered the same lowly personal services which it had been her delight to lavish upon them when Landgravine of Thuringia.

No religious ever excelled her in the practice of poverty. Her coarse habit was pieced over and over again with patches of all shades and colours, till its original texture could scarcely be distinguished. She collected these pieces wherever she could, and sewed them on as well as she could, for she was a bad needlewoman.

She insisted upon doing the cooking and all the work of the little household herself, and waited like a menial upon her companions, who remonstrated with her in vain upon a humility so painful to them.

"It is true, dearest lady," said one of them, "that you are gaining great merit by your behaviour to us, but you forget the danger we run of being puffed up with pride, when you cook our dinner for us, and then insist upon our sitting down by your side to eat it with you;"—to which Elizabeth answered: "Well, if you will not sit by my side, you must sit on my knee;" and she took her in her arms and made her sit down accordingly.

Her patience and charity were proof against all trials. Never was the slightest expression of discontent forced from her. She often spoke at great 1 mgth to her companions: the heavenly sweetness and joyousness of her heart overflowed in these intimate conversations; but she would never suffer a vain or light word to be spoken in her presence, or one tinged with anger or impatience. She would interrupt the speaker at once with an authority full of grace and sweetness, saying, "Where is our Lord, then, all this time?"

One of her first cares after her arrival at Marburg was to build a hospital, which she consecrated to St. Francis of Assisi. Pope Gregory IX., who had just canonized the saint, sent her a relic even more precious than the mantle which she had received with so much gratitude a few years before—some drops of blood from the miraculous wound in the side of St. Francis. She placed it in the chapel of her new hospital.

There she devoted herself as before, to the care of the sick, choosing for the objects of her special tenderness cases of leprosy, or other diseases which rendered the sufferers objects of horror and loathing to less heroic souls. Nature would sometimes rebel, and was then quelled by means which our fastidious delicacy shudders even to read of. Once, as she was returning from church, she met a poor beggar, whom she brought home with her, and began to wash his hands and feet. A feeling of repugnance overcame her so far that she shuddered at her revolting task. With a holy indignation at what she accounted her own immortification, she drank the water which she had been using, saying, "O my Lord, Thou didst drink vinegar and gall for us on the cross; I am not worthy to drink this for Thee: help me to become better."

Elizabeth was no less zealous for the souls of her poor, than charitable in her care of their bodies; and when there was need of it, knew how to use a wholesome severity towards them. A blind man presented himself one day to be received into the hospital. Elizabeth happened to be standing at the door with Master Conrad. She consented willingly to receive him, but insisted that he should first approach the sacrament of penance, which he had long neglected. The blind man began to curse and blaspheme, but Elizabeth reproved him with such force and energy, that he was struck with compunction, and kneeling down on the spot, made his confession to Master Conrad.

The Saint did not confine her charitable ministrations to the inmates of the hospital, but visited all the surrounding poor in their own miserable dwellings; and when she met with some objects more than usually wretched and loathsome, she would remove them—not into the hospital, but into her own cottage; and devote herself especially to their relief.

She thus took home a poor orphan boy, who had been born lame, blind, and paralytic. On this forlorn child she lavished all the cares of the tenderest mother, and when he died she replaced him by a poor girl, so disfigured by leprosy that no one in the hospital dared to approach her, or even look at her from a distance. Elizabeth kept her till Master Conrad forbade her to do so any longer, lest she should herself be infected; but she soon found another child hardly less miserable, whom she kept with her till her death.

Meanwhile, the royal father of this poor infirmarian heard from some Hungarian pilgrims returning from Aix-la-Chapelle, of the state of misery to which his daughter was reduced. He was distressed even to tears by the tale, and immediately sent the Count of Banfi, with a numerous suite, to ask an account of the regent, Henry, of the strange position of his daughter.

"My sister," replied the young prince, "is mad, as everybody knows. You can go and see her, and judge for yourself." He then gave the Hungarians an account of the extravagancies she was in the habit of committing, and how she lived entirely with lepers, and beggars, and such sort of people. He shewed them that her poverty was entirely voluntary, he having guaranteed to her all, and much more than she desired.

The Count, much amazed, set off for Marburg; and on his arrival, asked the master of the inn where he

stopped what he knew of the lady Elizabeth, and why she led so strange a life away from her family and friends. "She is a very pious and virtuous lady," replied the host: "she is as rich as any one can desire to be; for this city, with all its dependant territory, which is not small, belongs to her in absolute possession; and if she had been willing, many a powerful prince would have been glad to marry her ;-but out of her great humility she lives thus miserably. She will not inhabit any of her houses in this city, but has built herself a little hut close to the hospital which she has founded, for she despises all the good things of this world. God has conferred a great grace upon us in sending us this pious lady, for all those who have anything to do with her, find great benefit to their souls. She never rests from her works of charity; she is most chaste, most sweet, most merciful; but above all, more humble than can be believed."

The Count begged the innkeeper to shew him the way to Elizabeth's dwelling. "Madam," said the good man, "here are some friends of yours come to see you, who wish to speak with you." When the ambassador entered the hut, and saw the daughter of his king spinning wool, with her distaff in her hand, he was moved to tears, and crossing himself, he exclaimed: "Was ever king's daughter before found spinning wool!"—then sitting down beside her, he told her that the king, her father, had sent him to fetch her home to

her own country, where he would cherish and honour her as his dearly beloved child; but Elizabeth turned a deaf ear to all his entreaties. "For what do you take me?" said she; "I am but a poor sinful woman, who have never served God as I ought to have done." "But who has reduced you to this state of misery?" enquired the Count. "No one," replied she, "unless it be the Son of my Heavenly Father, who, being infinitely rich, has taught me by His example to despise riches, and to prize poverty above all the kingdoms of this world;"—and then she told him the history of her life since her widowhood, and her intentions for the future, and assured him that she had nothing to complain of; that she wanted nothing, and was perfectly happy. The ambassador still urged her father's wishes, beseeching her to return and share his kingdom and inheritance. "I trust well," said she, "that I already possess my Father's inheritance—that is, the everlasting mercy of our dear Lord Jesus Christ." When the Count urged her not to do her father the wrong of leading a life so unworthy of her birth, the Saint made answer: "Tell my lord and father that I am happier in this contemptible life than he can be in all his royal pomp; and that, far from grieving on my account, he ought rather to rejoice that he has a child in the service of the great King of heaven and earth. I have but one favour to ask of him, and that is, that he will pray, and get others to pray, for me, and I will pray for him as long as I live."

The Count left her in deep sorrow; but she returned to her distaff, happy to be able to realize beforehand those sublime words which the church puts into the mouths of those who, like her, have left all things for Christ: "I have despised the kingdoms of this world, and all the pomp thereof, for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER IX.

Last trials and victories.

It might have seemed that there was nothing more for the Saint to give up—no material left for farther sacrifice; but Master Conrad had discovered that there was still a fibre in her heart to which self-will might attach itself, and he set himself relentlessly to pluck it out. He began to restrict her in her works of mercy, and forbade her to give more than a single penny to any poor person at a time. She tried, by various stratagems, to evade this hard precept, causing silver pennies to be struck instead of copper; and when the poor

complained of the sudden diminution of her bountiful alms, she would say to them, "I am forbidden to give you more than a penny at a time, but I am not forbidden to give to you as often as you come and ask me." The pensioners were not slow to take the hint. and encircled the house continually, entering by one gate and going out at another. Her director having discovered these stratagems of charity, reproved her severely, and even inflicted blows upon her, which she received with joy, in memory of the buffeting endured for her by her Divine Redeemer. Conrad next forbade her to give away money upon any pretext whatever, but permitted her to distribute bread in small slices, for she was not to give a whole loaf to any one. At last she was forbidden to give any kind of relief, and her charity was restricted to the care of the sick, with the exception of lepers, whom, as the chosen objects of her tender compassion, she was forbidden to touch.

The restraint laid upon her charity to the poor of Christ was perhaps the hardest to be borne of all the crosses which, one after another, she took up for His love; but she thus learned the perfection of that obedience which is more acceptable in His sight than any other sacrifice which can be offered to Him. She accepted the bitter discipline with her whole heart, and became most expert in this last and most difficult point of the science of the saints. Her obedient soul spoke of victories. No command could be too hard, no obedience

to one who did not treat her with the ordinary courtesy due to her sire and rank, or even with the charity which belongs to the relation of priest and penitent. "The holy man," says a writer of the time, "did all this to break her will, that she might set all her love upon God, and remember no more her former glory;—and in all things she was prompt to obey and firm to suffer, so that she possessed her soul in patience, and her victory was ennobled by obedience." She did not conceal the fear which she felt of her director—not for himself, but as the representative of God. "If I thus fear a mortal man," said she to her companions, "how much more should I tremble before God, who is the Lord and Judge of all men."

Master Conrad used his power over her with the most extreme severity. He sent for her once to meet him at the convent of Aldenburg, where she had placed her youngest child, and where he had some idea of placing herself. On her arrival, the nuns asked his permission for her to enter the enclosure. Conrad, who had previously warned her that any person, of either sex, who entered it without permission, incurred excommunication, replied: "Let her enter, if she will." Elizabeth understood the words as a permission, and entered the forbidden precinct. Conrad immediately sent for her, and having shewn her the book in which her oath of obedience was registered, ordered a monk

who was with him to inflict a certain number of blows, with a long staff, upon the Saint and her attendant, Irmengarde, while he recited the Miserere. Elizabeth endured this humiliating punishment without a murmur, and spoke of it thus afterwards to Irmengarde: "We ought to suffer such chastisement with patience, like the reeds by the river's side, which bend without breaking, under the weight of the inundation, and when it is past, rise up with new strength and life. So we must sometimes be humbled and bowed down to the earth, to rise up again with joy and confidence."

Another time, the Saint, being engrossed by the care of one of her patients, neglected to attend a sermon, preached by Master Conrad, on the Passion, to the hearing of which an indulgence was attached. As soon as the sermon was over he sent for her, and enquired what she had been doing instead of coming to the sermon; and then, without waiting for an answer, he gave her a violent blow, saying: "This is to teach you to come another time, when I send for you!" She only smiled, and was about to explain the cause of her absence, when he struck her again, and this time the blow drew blood. Elizabeth raised her eyes to heaven and kept them fixed there for some time, and then she said: "O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast chosen me for this!" Her women asking her how she could bear such treatment, she replied: "For having suffered it patiently, God permitted me to see Christ in

the midst of His angels: the Master's blows have raised me to the third heaven." When these words were repeated to Conrad, he said: "I am sorry that I did not send her to the ninth heaven!"

And now a new form of trial came upon the patient sufferer—the hardest, perhaps, of all, to a woman's nature. Elizabeth had been long called foolish, prodigal, and mad;—her fair fame was now assailed by the same evil tongues; and her submission to her stern director was said to proceed from a criminal attachment! These reports assumed so serious a form that her faithful friend and champion, Rodolph of Varila, thought it right to enquire into their origin. He therefore went to Marburg, and addressing Elizabeth with great respect-"May I be permitted, madam," said he, "to speak to you with freedom and plainness?" Having received ready permission to do so, he continued: "I beseech my dear lady, then, to look well to her fair fame, for her intercourse with Master Conrad has given occasion to vile suspicions and evil surmises among perverse and vulgar spirits."

Elizabeth raised her eyes to heaven, and without the smallest discomposure of countenance, replied: "Blessed in all things be our most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, my only friend, who vouchsafes to receive this poor offering at my hands for His love; to devote myself to His service I have renounced my royalty of birth; I have despised my riches and possessions; I have dis-

figured my youth and beauty; I have forsaken father, country, children—all the consolations of this life. I had reserved to myself but one only treasure—my womanly honour and reputation. But now it seems that He calls for this also; and I give it to Him with all my heart, since He deigns to accept my fair fame as a special sacrifice, and to make me pleasing in His sight by this ignominy. I consent to be accounted henceforth a dishonoured woman. But, O dearest Saviour! my poor children, who are yet innocent, vouchsafe to preserve them from all shame and disgrace which might come upon them through me."

She desired, however, to reassure her noble and faithful friend, and shewing him the marks of the blows which she had lately received,—"These, sir knight," said she, "are tokens of how this holy priest loves me—or rather, of how he teaches me to love God."

Amid all her sufferings "the dear Saint" had enjoyed one human consolation—the love and sympathy of the two companions of her childhood, Guta and Ysentrude. She was perhaps scarcely conscious how much the loneliness of her now childless widowhood was soothed by the presence of those who had shared all her joys and sorrows, and taken part in all her exercises of devotion and charity. But the keen eye of Master Conrad had marked the spot where human affection still lingered, and having already dismissed

all the other members of her household, with whom her clinging and tender heart could not part without sensible pain, he came to the two cherished companions of her childhood. Ysentrude, the best beloved, the sharer of her most secret thoughts and feelings, was the first to be sent away; -- then Guta, who had been her companion ever since she was five years old, and whom she loved most affectionately, was taken from her. Bitterly did she weep for the loss of these two last objects of her love. She was left indeed alone with God, but she was not to enjoy the blessedness of that solitude, for Conrad replaced her two dear friends by two companions chosen for the purpose of trying her patient spirit to the utmost. One of them, named Elizabeth, was a peasant, coarse and rough to excess, and so frightfully ugly that she served as a bugbear to frighten children. The other was a widow, who was old, deaf, and ill-humoured. Elizabeth submitted to the change in her companions with the most perfect sweetness, and set herself to advance in humility by her intercourse with the rude peasant girl, and in patience by enduring the scolding of the ill-tempered old woman.

The two women tried her to the utmost by continual ill-treatment. In a spirit of penance Elizabeth took upon herself all the hard work of the household, which they left to her without any scruple; and when, being absorbed in contemplation, she made some blunder in

the preparation of their miserable meal, they would reprove her harshly, telling her she was fit for nothing, and could not even make a basin of soup; "as if," says her chronicler, "she had ever been taught to cook." They were also always on the watch to report to her director the slightest deviation—of which they suspected her-from his commands respecting almsgiving; and they thus often drew down severe chastisements upon her. But no provocation could induce her to swerve for a moment from the obedience she had vowed to him as the representative of Christ. So scrupulous was her fidelity, that when her old and beloved friends came sometimes to visit her, she never ventured to offer them refreshment, or even to speak to them, without having first obtained the permission of her director.

Elizabeth had sent her children from her, yet it would seem that some of them occasionally came to see her, when she would indulge her mother's love by caressing them, and imprinting fond kisses on their foreheads; but, either at Master Conrad's suggestion, or finding that their presence, even at these distant intervals, disturbed her union with God, she deprived herself of this last solace, and the children came no more.

Ten years afterwards, when St. Louis was holding his court at Saumur, a young German prince, about eighteen years of age, was seen in attendance upon the queen mother, Blanche of Castile. He was pointed out with admiration as the son of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and queen Blanche would reverently kiss the fair brow which had been consecrated by the pressure of her lips. We love to picture to ourselves the son of St. Elizabeth thus adopted by the mother of St. Louis.

Meanwhile, "the dear Saint" was filling her lonely hours with fresh deeds of miraculous charity. On her daily visit to the hospital she one day found a poor helpless child lying upon the threshold. He was not only deaf and dumb, but his limbs were so twisted and distorted that he could only drag himself along on his hands and knees, like some miserable animal. His mother had brought him there by night, and left him, in the hope that the good Landgravine would have compassion upon the miserable being whom she herself was ashamed to own.

As soon as Elizabeth saw him she stooped over him with tender pity, and said: "Where are thy parents, dear child, who brought thee hither?" But as the boy did not seem to understand her, she repeated her question in a still softer tone, and said, as she caressed him,—"What ails thee, poor child?—why wilt thou not speak to me?" The child then fixed his eyes upon her, but without speaking. Not knowing that he was dumb, she thought he was possessed, and said in a loud voice: "In the name of our Lord I command thee and him who is in thee to answer me, and

tell me whence thou camest." The child stood upright before her; his speech was immediately restored, and he said: "My mother brought me here;"—and then he told the Saint that he had never seen or heard before, and that he had been born in the state in which she had seen him. "But now," said he, as he stretched out his limbs one after another, "now God has given me motion, speech, and hearing; and I speak words which I have never heard nor learned from any one." And then he began to weep, and thank God. "I knew not God," said he: "all my senses were dead; I knew not what a man is; but now I feel that I am no longer like a beast. I can now speak of God. Blessed be that question of yours, which obtained for me the grace from God not to die as I have hitherto lived."

At these words Elizabeth perceived that God had been pleased to work a miracle by her means, and she fell on her knees and mingled her tears with those of the child whom she had saved. "Return now," said she, "at once to thy parents, and tell no one what has happened;—above all, say nothing to any one about me. Say only that God has helped thee; and guard thyself day and night from mortal sin, or thou mayest soon fall again into thy sickness. Never forget what thou hast suffered, and always pray for me, as I will always do for thee;"—and then she escaped from him to avoid the glory of the miracle. The child's mother came to the spot just as she disappeared, and, amazed

to see her child standing upright, and to hear him speak, said: "Who has restored thy speech?"—to which the child answered: "A sweet lady in a grey gown spoke to me in the name of Jesus Christ, and words were given me to answer her." The mother immediately went in pursuit of Elizabeth, and having recognized her at a distance, published the miracle all over the country.

This is but one of many instances of the miraculous attestation granted to the sanctity of Elizabeth; and yet, strange as it may seem, all these proofs of the love of God towards her, were unable wholly to remove from her mind a sort of distrust of the Divine mercy, arising from her keen sense of her own unworthiness. It was this for which our Lady had reproved her in the first days of her widowhood. She was one day speaking upon this subject to her old friend and confessor, Father Rodinger, who had come to visit her, as they walked together on the banks of the Lahn. "There is one thing, reverend father," said she, "which troubles me above all. I cannot help having a sort of doubt of the love of God for me; -not but that I know Him to be infinitely good, and most lavish in His love, but because of my many demerits, which set me far off from Him, although I be all on fire with His love." "You have nothing to fear on this account," replied the father, "for the Divine goodness is so great that it is impossible to doubt that God loves those who love

Him far more than He is loved by them;" and pointing to a beautiful tree on the other side of the river, he told her that that tree should sooner cross over to the bank on which they were walking together, than God should suffer Himself to be surpassed in love by one of His creatures. He had hardly uttered the words, when, to the amazement of all present, the tree of which he spoke was seen to cross the river, and take root on the opposite side. At this marvellous testimony to the Divine love, Elizabeth cast herself at the feet of Father Rodinger to confess her want of faith and trust, and to obtain forgiveness.

CHAPTER X.

Sickness, Death, and Canonization of the Saint.

Two years had hardly passed away since Elizabeth had received, with the habit of St. Francis, strength to run with giant steps the remainder of her course, when her heavenly Bridegroom called her home. One night, towards the close of the year 1231, as Elizabeth lay upon her bed in prayer, our Lord appeared to her in the midst of a soft bright light, and said, in a voice of ineffable sweetness: "Come, Elizabeth, my bride, my

tender friend, my well-beloved, -come with me into the tabernacle which I have prepared for thee from all eternity. I myself will lead thee thither." awakening, she hastened, full of joy at her approaching deliverance, to make every preparation for her departure. She made arrangements for her burial, paid a last visit to her poor, and divided everything she possessed between them and her attendants. Master Conrad was suffering at the time from a severe illness, and sent word to her to come to him. He received her with much affection; and when she lamented his sufferings, he said: "What will become of you, my lady and dear daughter, when I am gone? How will you regulate your life?—who will protect you against the wicked?-and who will direct you on your way to heaven?" But she answered: "Your anxiety, father, is needless, for I shall die before you, and shall never want any other protector than yourself."

On the fourth day after this conversation she felt the first approach of the sickness which was to set her free. She was obliged to take to her bed, where she remained for about a fortnight, suffering from a raging fever, but calm and joyous in spirit as usual, and absorbed almost continually in prayer. At the end of this time, as she was apparently asleep, one of her women, named Elizabeth, who was sitting by her bed, heard a sweet and exquisite melody, which seemed to issue from her throat. The Saint just then changed

her position, and turning towards her companion, said: "Where art thou, my beloved?" "Here," replied the servant, adding, "Oh, madam! how sweetly you have been singing!" "What!" said Elizabeth; "did you hear anything?"-and on her reply, the Saint continued, "I will tell thee how it was. A beautiful little bird came and perched between me and the wall, and he sang to me for a long time together so sweetly that I could not help singing too. He revealed to me that I am to die in the course of three days." From that moment she refused to admit any seculars to visit her. She took leave of those whom she was accustomed to receive, and gave them her blessing for the last time. She kept no one with her but her women, some religious who were specially attached to her, her confessor, and the poor leprous girl whom she had adopted in the place of the bright and beautiful children whom she had given up to God. When she was asked why she thus excluded every one from her presence, she answered: "I wish to be alone with God, and to meditate on the dreadful day of judgment, and my Almighty Judge." Then she began to weep, and implore the mercy of God.

On Sunday, the 18th of November, 1231, being the vigil of St. Martin, after matins she confessed to Master Conrad, who was sufficiently recovered to be able to hear her. "She took her heart in her hand," says a contemporary historian, "and read all that

was to be read therein; but there was nothing which had not been washed away over and over again by the waters of true contrition." Conrad then asked her directions with regard to her property. "I wonder," said she, "that you should ask me such a question. You know that when I made a vow of obedience to you, I renounced all my possessions as well as my will, my dear children, and all the pleasures of this world. I have kept nothing except by your command, to pay debts and to do alms. I should have wished, had you permitted me, to renounce all, and to live in a cell upon the daily bread which other poor people would have allowed me. For a long time past everything which I seemed to possess has belonged in reality to the poor. Distribute, then, among them everything that I leave behind, except this old worn habit, in which I wish to be buried. I make no will, for I have no heir but Jesus Christ." But as one of her companions begged for something as a remembrance, she gave her the old cloak of St. Francis, which had been sent her by the Pope. "I leave thee my mantle," said she; "despise it not because it is old, and patched, and worn: it is the most precious jewel which I ever possessed. I tell thee, that whenever I have wished to obtain any special grace from my dearest Jesus, I have had nothing to do but to wear this mantle while I made my petition, and it was sure to be granted." She then begged to be buried in the church of the

hospital which she had built, and dedicated to St. Francis. After she had conversed for a long time with her confessor, and had heard mass, she received the last sacraments with an ineffable joy, fully known only to Him who thus visited her, but manifested in some measure to all who were present by the supernatural brightness of her countenance. She then remained silent and motionless until the hour of vespers, when her lips were unlocked to pour forth a flood of heavenly eloquence—the more marvellous to all who heard her from her wonted silence and reserve.

She recited at length the whole narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus, and dwelt with deep feeling upon our Lord's visit to the mourning sisters, and the deep mystery of His divine tears. Her words were so moving that all present began to weep; when, full as ever of tender sympathy, she addressed them in the words of our Lord to the sorrowing women who followed Him to Calvary: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves;—and she sought to soothe her attendants by the most affectionate expressions. "My friends, my dearly loved ones"—such was the language of her loving heart to the rough unsympathizing souls, by whom Conrad had replaced her devoted Guta and Ysentrude. She had won their love by the continual outpouring of her own.

Elizabeth now bowed her head, and remained for some time silent; and then, while her lips continued

closed, a soft and exquisite melody was again heard in her throat. When questioned by those present, she replied: "Did you not hear them singing with me? I sang with them as well as I could." Her sweet voice was already mingling with the angels in the new song which is ever sounding before the throne of the Lamb. She remained till near midnight in a state of holy exultation, as if triumphing in her assured victory; but suddenly she exclaimed: "What should we do if our enemy the devil were to appear?" A moment afterwards she cried with a very loud, clear voice,-"Fly, fly, evil one! I have renounced thee!" She soon added: "He is gone; -let us now speak of God and His Son. Let not this weary you, for it will not be long." At the first cock-crowing she said: "This is the hour at which the Blessed Virgin gave birth to our Lord. Let us speak of God, of the Infant Jesus; for this is midnight, when Jesus was born; when He was laid in the manger; and when He created a new star, which was never seen before. This is the hour when He came to redeem the world: He will redeem me also. This is the hour when He raised the dead and delivered the souls which were in bondage: He will deliver mine also, out of this miserable world." Her joy seemed to increase every moment. "I am weak," said she, "but I feel no pain, no more than if I were not ill. I recommend you all to God." Then she said: "O Mary, come to my aid. The moment is

come when God calls His friends to the marriage. The Bridegroom comes to seek His bride. Silence! silence!"-and as she said these words she bowed her head, and triumphantly breathed forth her last sigh. A sweet perfume immediately filled the humble cabin, and a choir of celestial voices was heard to chant, in ineffable harmony, the sublime response of the church, Regnum mundi, &c. "The kingdom of the world and all its glory I have despised for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I have seen; Whom I have loved; in Whom I have believed: Whom I have loved." This was on the night of the 19th November, 1231. Saint had but just completed her twenty-fourth year. Hardly had her happy soul entered into its everlasting rest, when her body became the object of the pious and enthusiastic devotion of her countrymen. It was arrayed in the poor worn tunic which she had chosen for her winding-sheet, and exposed in the humble chapel of her own hospital, to the loving and wondering gaze of the faithful.

She lay before them in more than mortal beauty. Elizabeth had fallen asleep with the marks of grief, and sickness, and austerity upon her face; but the touch of death had glorified even her mortal body; and the loving friends of her girlhood, who came once more to look upon her face, felt that not even in the first freshness of her youth, as the happy bride of the good Landgrave, or the joyful mother of his fair children,

had she been so radiently beautiful as now. A delicious fragrance floated around her bier; and on the night preceding her burial, while the office for the dead was chanted, a strange harmony was heard without. Several persons left the church to ascertain the cause, and saw a number of birds, of a species never before seen, perched upon the roof of the church, and singing this wondrous melody, as if they would celebrate her obsequies after their own fashion. Some said they were angels, who had been sent from God to carry the soul of "the dear Saint Elizabeth" to heaven, and were now come back to honour her sacred body by their songs of heavenly gladness. "These little birds," says St. Bonaventure, "bore witness to her purity by speaking their language to her at her burial, and singing with this marvellous sweetness over her tomb. He who once spoke by the mouth of an ass to rebuke the madness of a prophet, might well speak by the song of birds to proclaim the innocence of a saint."

Many remarkable miracles attested the sanctity of a life which scarcely needed them to establish its claim to the homage of Christendom.

On the 10th of August, 1232, Siegfrid, the Prince Archbishop of Mayence, in whose diocese Marburg was situated, at the request of Master Conrad consecrated two altars, erected in her honour in the church where she was buried. Conrad was busily engaged in collecting the evidence necessary for the process of her

canonization, when his violent death interposed a delay. Another Conrad, the younger brother of the good Landgrave, took up the cause, and was the apparently most unlikely instrument of its success. The young prince had become a true penitent, both for his cruelty to his saintly sister, and for a course of reckless wickedness by which it had been followed up. He took the cross of the Teutonic Order in the church of the hospital of St. Francis, founded by St. Elizabeth at Marburg, endowed it with all his possessions in Hesse and Thuringia, and made it one of the principal stations of the Teutonic Order-all in honour of the Landgravine Elizabeth; and in farther reparation for the wrongs done to her when on earth, he devoted all the influence of his princely station and sacred character to obtain a public recognition of her exalted place in heaven.

In the spring of the year 1235, Conrad went to the Pope at Perugia, where he had canonized St. Francis seven years before, and besought him to write the name of the holy patriarca's humble daughter by his side. After a long and very severe investigation, the petition was granted; and on the Feast of Pentecost of the same year, the hand of Gregory IX., which had already been permitted to inscribe the names of St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Antony of Padua, in the catalogue of the Saints, wrote the name of "the dear Saint Elizabeth," beside them.

The bull of canonization was received with great enthusiasm in Germany. The 1st of May was appointed by the Archbishop of Mayence for the translation of the relics of the Saint; and all that was sacred in the church, or exalted in the world, poured into Marburg to do her honour. The Emperor Frederic II., now reconciled with the Pope, and at the summit of his glory, came in the humble garb of a penitent to lay his rejected diadem upon the tomb of her who had despised the empire of the world for Christ. Twelve hundred thousand Christians, we are told, gathered round the tomb of the humble Elizabeth, and bore back to their homes the tidings of the wonders which were wrought there before their eyes.

When the coffin was opened, previous to the translation of the sacred body, it was found still to retain the beauty and flexibility in which it had been laid to rest five years before. A sweet perfume exhaled from it, and the spectators saw with amazement a pure and fragrant oil distil from the remains of her whose mortal life had been embalmed with charity and fragrant with prayer. The oil was carefully preserved, and numerous cures were wrought by its application.

The humble servant of the poor was borne to the stately resting-place prepared for her on the shoulders of the proudest and noblest of the chivalry of Germany, with the Emperor at their head. At the offertory he laid a crown of gold upon her shrine, saying: "I might

not crown her living as my empress; I desire at least to crown her to-day as an immortal queen in the kingdom of heaven." He then led the young Landgrave Herman to the altar, to make his offering; and the Empress (Isabella of England) in like manner led the little princesses, Sophia and Gertrude, by the hand. The old Landgravine Sophia, with her two sons, Henry and Conrad, followed to do homage to her whose life they had once accounted folly. How must the hearts of those who had been so near to her on earth, have swelled, and yet trembled within them, as the Ora pronobis sancta Elizabeth alleluia proclaimed to heaven, and earth, and hell, that once more the Lord had put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble!

CHAPTER XI.

Miracles at the tomb of St. Elizabeth.—Church erected to her honour.—Dispersion of her relics and desolation of her Church.—Notices of her children and some of her kindred.—Conrad.—St. Hedwige.

THE tidings of the canonization of St. Elizabeth spread far and wide throughout Europe, and pilgrims from all countries came to bring their prayers and offerings to her shrine. One of the most touching instances of the

exertion of her miraculous power after death, in behalf of sorrow and suffering, was vouchsafed to a simple and pious couple from her own native country-Hungary. They had lost their only child, and on the night of her death, after a day spent in weeping and mourning, they retired to rest. It was long before either could sleep, but at last the heavy slumber of sorrow closed the poor mother's eyes, and in her sleep she saw a vision which bade her take her dead child to the tomb of St. Elizabeth, in Germany. When she awoke she said to her husband: "Let us not bury our poor little one, but carry her in faith to St. Elizabeth, by whom the Lord works so many miracles, that by her prayers she may be restored to life." Her husband consented; and on the morrow, when all the neighbours were assembled to see the child carried to the parish church, the parents, regardless of their astonishment and ridicule, set off for Marburg with the body of their child, carefully wrapt up, and laid in a basket. The Lord had compassion on their sorrow and their faith, and while they were yet on their way to the sanctuary of His beloved servant, restored their child to life. poor people did not forget, in their overwhelming joy, their debt of gratitude to their blessed patroness; but accomplished their long pilgrimage, taking with them the living and joyous form which had left Hungary a cold and lifeless corpse.

Their daughter, when grown up, became a nun in a

convent of Dominicanesses at Ratisbonne, of which she was afterwards prioress, and where she was still living, in great reputation for sanctity, in the time of the historian who has recorded this miracle.

At the other extremity of Europe,—in far distant England,—there was a noble lady who, after a union of twenty years, was left by her husband's death a childless widow. To comfort herself in her lonely state, she adopted twelve orphan children, upon whom she lavished all the tender cares of the fondest mother. Whenever she met any poor or suffering object, she gave him an alms for the love of God and St. Elizabeth, for she had heard of "the dear Saint" in her distant northern home, and her heart clung to her with a love beyond that which she bore to any one on earth, or to any other saint of God in heaven. In her honour she cut off her hair, and wore always a coarse grey habit, like her's; and day and night she meditated upon her holy life.

At last, when God so willed it, this noble and virtuous lady died, and as her friends stood weeping around her bed, her confessor told them that they ought to carry her body to the tomb of St. Elizabeth, for that in her lifetime she had vowed to make a pilgrimage thither. Her friends obeyed the injunction, and traversed sea and land with the body, until, at the end of seven weeks' time, they arrived at Marburg. There they invoked the Saint with great fervour, when the pious lady suddenly returned to life, saying: "How happy I

am! I have rested upon the bosom of St. Elizabeth." Her friends wished to take her back to England, but she refused to leave the spot sanctified by the presence of her heavenly friend. She lived there for fifteen years longer, leading a life of great sanctity, but in absolute silence—never speaking to any one but her confessor. When he asked her why she had laid this obligation upon herself, she replied: "When I rested upon St. Elizabeth's bosom I tasted so sweet a joy that I can never henceforth think of anything else but how to regain it."

The foundation of the noble church, which, cold and deserted as Protestantism can make it, still bears her name, was laid by the saintly penitent, Conrad, a few months after the canonization of St. Elizabeth. It is one of the most beautiful specimens remaining of the most perfect style of Gothic architecture. The body of the humble Saint remained for three centuries in its place of stately rest beneath the lofty aisles of that glorious temple, guarded by the good swords of the Teutonic knights, the sworn and consecrated defenders of the faith. At last the spoiler came, and the grand master was compelled to stand by in stern and indignant sorrow while the Landgrave of Hesse, the friend of Luther and the worthless descendant of the Saint. rifled the costly shrine which contained her relics, for the sake of the gold and gems with which it was enchased. It was in the same year which witnessed

this act of unnatural sacrilege, that the miserable man obtained a dispensation, signed by Luther and seven other evangelical theologians, assembled at Wittenburg, to marry two wives at a time.

The relics of St. Elizabeth were afterwards restored, by command of the Emperor Charles V., to the grand master of the Teutonic knights; but a great portion was found to be missing; and from that time their dispersion has been complete. The heart had long before been sent to Cambray. The skull is preserved at Besançon; other portions are venerated in Hungary; and at Hanover, Vienna, Cologne, and especially at Breslau in the chapel dedicated to her, in 1630, by Cardinal Frederic of Hesse, Bishop of that city, and one of her descendants. In the same chapel is preserved the staff on which she leaned when she was driven from Wartburg. A glass, out of which she used to drink, is preserved at Erfurt; her wedding dress at Andechs, with her marriage ring, her prayerbook, table, and straw chair. Her veil is shewn at Tongres. In 1833 the Count of Boos Waldeck possessed one of the Saint's arms, which he had offered to several of the sovereigns of Europe who number her among their ancestors, but without finding a purchaser.

None of her relics now remain at Marburg. Tradition says that some of them were buried under the high altar, and stolen thence in 1634. No memorial of the Saint is now left in the glorious church dedicated to

her honour, except a large piece of tapestry representing the history of the Prodigal Son, which is said to be her work, and which is used by the Lutherans in their communion rite. Through those silent and deserted aisles not a voice has been raised in her honour for the three dark and desolate centuries which have rolled on since the daily sacrifice has been taken away; and, with the worship of the Lamb, the veneration of those who stand around His throne has ceased out of the land. Her country has denied the faith ;—the children of those to whom she was a ministering angel think it scorn to ask her motherly protection. Her own descendant, the heir of her princely and holy husband, who laid his sacrilegious hand upon her precious relics, has bequeathed his faithless heresy to his descendants and her's. Thuringia and Hesse have renounced Catholicism. From the old towers of Wartburg, where the fame of Luther has eclipsed that of the Saint, the traveller's eye looks in vain for a single church or a single Catholic cottage. In the city where she died,on the marble floor of which may still be traced the footsteps of the devout multitudes who once came to worship at her shrine,—her life, her death, her sufferings, and her sanctity, are historical facts, and nothing more: and the few Catholics who dwell there have not even a mass upon her feast day. When the Count de Montalembert asked the priest of the little Catholic church where, after three hundred years of persecution, mass is now said upon Sundays,—whether he offered it up on the Feast of St. Elizabeth,—he replied, that he had never thought of doing so!

We will hope that the question was not asked in vain, and that "the dear Saint" is at least remembered there once a year by her brethren in the faith.

In the country of her adoption, her name still lingers, indeed; but only as a beautiful and poetical tradition. Elizabeth's Garden, Elizabeth's Fountain, Elizabeth's Bridge, the "Infirmary"—still pointed out by tradition as the spot where she died; the pilgrim's stone, still marking the resting-place of the long files of pilgrims who came to worship at her shrine—all speak of a memory still dear to the hearts of a people who, while they have lost the spiritual instincts which once led them to venerate the Saint, still retain the enthusiastic reverence of the German race for all that is pure and noble in woman.

King Andrew of Hungary died soon after the canonization of his blessed child; his few surviving years being clouded by regret for having so long neglected her, and so little appreciated her virtues.

Her fervent admirer and champion, Conrad, did not long survive the glorious act of reparation he offered to her memory. His piety, courage, and great modesty led to his being elected Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, which he had entered in a spirit of penance; and he devoted the power and wealth which his position gave him, to the construction of the noble basilica erected to the honour of St. Elizabeth at Marburg.

In order to superintend the works, he chose that city for his own residence, and the central position of his order. He engaged with great courage and energy in the wars of the Teutonic knights with the heathen in Prussia, and received the investiture of that province from the Pope. Before his death, he desired once more to see Rome, where he was seized by a mortal sickness, during which he attained to so great a degree of interior purity as to be sensibly pained by the presence of any one in mortal sin. All those who waited upon him were obliged to live in great purity of conscience. One day, when his confessor—a venerable Cistertian abbot came to his bed-side, he found him rapt in ecstacy. Being asked what he had seen in his vision, the prince replied: "I stood before the bar of the Eternal Judge awaiting my final sentence. I was condemned to five years of purgatory, but my good sister Elizabeth came forward and obtained the remission of my punishment. Know, then, that I shall die of this sickness, and go to enjoy eternal glory." He died a few days afterwards, leaving directions that his body should be carried to Marburg, and buried near that of his holy sister, in the church which he had founded in her honour.

The course of his brother Henry was far different. The evil spirit of ambition again awoke within him after the death of St. Elizabeth; and his memory is branded with the suspicion of having murdered his nephew, Herman, for the sake of his inheritance.

At the age of sixteen this young prince took possession of the dominions of his father, which had till then been governed by his uncle Henry, in his name. He soon afterwards went to France to visit St. Louis, by whom he was received with reverential affection, as the son of St. Elizabeth. This was a name dearly prized by all her children, who, in their charters and other official acts, were accustomed to prefix to all their worldly titles, the glorious name of son or daughter of St. Elizabeth.*

On his return from France, the young Landgrave married Helena, the daughter of Duke Otho of Brunswick; but before the end of two years he was snatched away, at the age of eighteen, from a life which gave every promise of honour and happiness, by a sudden illness—commonly attributed to poison administered at the instigation of his unworthy uncle. Before he died, he expressed an earnest desire to be buried by the side of his blessed mother, at Marburg; but Henry refused this last request, fearing, with the craven superstition which in the wicked takes the place of faith, that his mother would raise him to life again.

Had he forgotten her earnestly expressed desire while yet in life, that the Lord would take her two elder

^{* &}quot;We, Sophia, Daughter of St. Elizabeth, Landgravine of Thuringia," &c.

children out of the world in which their lot was cast, when he lent himself as the blind and evil instrument of its fulfilment?

The body of the murdered prince was laid beside that of his father, at Rheinhartsbrunn.

On the death of Henry, without issue, Thuringia was torn to pieces by a long war of succession. Sophia, the eldest daughter of the Landgrave Louis and St. Elizabeth, who was married, as we have seen, to the Duke of Brabant, claimed the inheritance of her father for herself and her son—a child of three years old. Her title was acknowledged without much difficulty in Hesse, which she ruled during her son's minority with great wisdom and vigour; but in Thuringia she met with a formidable competitor in her cousin Henry, Margrave of Misnia, the son of Guta, sister to the Landgraves Louis and Henry.

After a long and obstinate struggle, in which Sophia displayed the qualities of a heroine and a sovereign, the contending parties came to an accommodation, by which the Margrave obtained the sovereignty of Thuringia, while Sophia and her son were left in peaceable possession of Hesse. This division subsists at the present day—the present rulers of Hesse and Saxony being descended from the rival princes, whose rights were determined by this treaty. Sophia died in 1284 at the age of sixty, after a life devoted to the welfare of her country and her family.

Her remains repose at Marburg, in the same tomb with those of her son, and in the church consecrated to her sainted mother. Her statue is still to be seen there, with the hands joined in prayer, and with the son to whose cause she had so faithfully devoted herself, represented as still in childhood, by her side. The face is worn by the kisses of the pilgrims, who bestowed on her a share of the love they bore her mother.

Such was the stormy and troubled life of the only one of "the dear Saint's" children who was left to pattle in the world. Her son, as we have seen, went early to his rest. Her two younger daughters ended their lives peaceably in the shelter she had chosen for them—the one at Kitzingen, the other at Aldenberg. Both became abbesses of their respective communities. Gertrude was elected in 1249, and governed her convent for nearly fifty years, following closely in the footsteps of her mother. Miracles have been attributed to her, and she has always borne the name of blessed. She died at the age of seventy, in 1297. Pope Clement VII. granted indulgences to those who should celebrate her feast. Her tomb is still shewn at Aldenburg, together with some precious memorials of her mother, which she had collected with pious care.

The maternal aunt of St. Elizabeth, St. Hedwige, Duchess of Poland and Silesia, survived her. She bore the greatest love and reverence to the young kinswoman, whose name she lived to see numbered among

the saints. She preserved one of her veils, which was sent to her as a memorial, with the greatest care, and wore it constantly to the day of her death.

St. Hedwige had been married at twelve years of age to Duke Henry of Poland. After the birth of six children, they parted by mutual consent, and Hedwige retired into a convent of Cistercian nuns, of which her daughter was elected abbess. There, with her husband's permission, she took the religious habit, but without binding herself by the vows, either of obedience or poverty, lest she should be restricted in the freedom of her almsgiving. She rivalled her holy niece in her humility and her extraordinary mortifications, which seem scarcely credible in one so delicately nurtured. So great was her humility, that like the Canaanean woman, who called forth an exclamation of admiration from her God, she often sought, as her only nourishment, the crumbs which fell from the table of the nuns, whom she delighted to serve.

But it was in her unbounded charity and overflowing compassion that she most resembled our dear Saint. "Her heart was so tender," says her pious chronicler, "that she could never see any one weep without weeping with him, nor could she ever rest if she saw others in trouble and distress. She had always poor persons at her table, whom she served on her knees before she sat down herself. When she thought no one was observing her, she would often kiss the ground upon

which the poor had trod, thus honouring, in their persons, Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, who became poor for us.

The good duchess would never suffer her vassals or serfs to be pressed for the payment of their dues: she made it a point to be present at the tribunals where the causes of the poor were to be heard; and if she saw that the judges were disposed to severity, she employed her chaplain, who always accompanied her, to rectify their sentence.

Her husband, who loved her with a most devoted and reverential affection, gave a touching proof of his warm sympathy with her compassion for the poor, by commanding that whenever Hedwige passed before the gates of the public prisons, they should be thrown open, and the prisoners set at liberty for her sake.

Her fervent piety equalled her tender charity. She daily heard as many masses as there were priests at her court, shedding abundant tears all the while. She had a special devotion to our Blessed Mother, to whom she would speak of all her wants and troubles with the simplicity of a child. She had always a little image of her Divine Patroness with her, which she carried in her hand when she went to visit the sick, and by means of which it was believed that she wrought many miraculous cures. When her husband was on one occasion taken prisoner by his rival, Duke Conrad, she sought the proud and vindictive conqueror with this

little image in her hand. Conrad felt as if he stood in the presence of an angel, and immediately concluded peace, at her request, and set the duke, her husband, at liberty.

Hedwige soon afterwards lost both this beloved husband and her son Henry, whom she loved with exceeding affection, and who fell as became a Christian prince, in defence of the independence of Europe against the Tartar hordes. She endured both these losses with the calm resignation of a soul whose supreme love rests upon God alone; but she did not long survive them. On the day of our Lady's nativity, 1243, the religious who was with her saw a train of beautiful maidens, arrayed in heavenly light, enter the cell and pay their greetings to Hedwige, who seemed to recognise them, for, with a face radiant with joy, she exclaimed: "Welcome, dear saints, and good friends, who are come to see me,-Magdalen, Catherine, Thecla, Ursula!" Then she spoke in Latin, and the religious could not understand what she said. On the 15th of October following, she breathed her last sigh giving thanks to God. She was canonized by Pope Clement IV. in 1267. When her body was disinterred previous to its translation, the little image of the Blessed Virgin, which she had so much loved, was found still clasped between her fingers.

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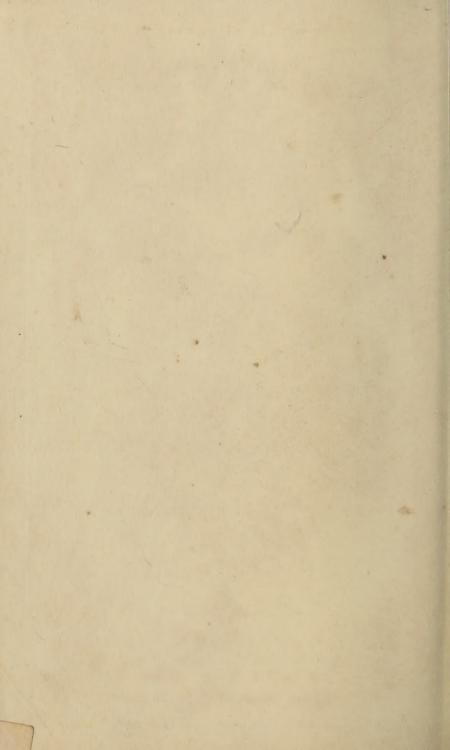
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